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DANTE AND THE ANIMAL  
KINGDOM



Com' occhio segue suo falcon volando

*Paradiso*, XVIII, 45.

From a fourteenth century MS. After Zambrini

# Dante and the Animal Kingdom

BY

RICHARD THAYER HOLBROOK, PH.D.

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To My Brother

Dwight



## PREFACE

THIS book aims to set forth Dante Alighieri's whole philosophy of the animal kingdom, to show from what sources he derives his knowledge, and to what ends his knowledge is employed.

Originally every relevant passage in Dante's works was cited in full in this volume; but considerations of bulk finally compelled the author to abandon such a luxury, and to quote only those passages in which the original Italian is absolutely essential to the understanding of Dante. Nevertheless, no relevant thought in any part of Dante's works, nothing that bears on his knowledge of the animal kingdom, or on his artistic power to portray animal life, has gone unheeded.

Many who study the Tuscan poet and philosopher have never acquired his language. These lovers of Dante will find the chapters of this book so arranged as to read smoothly enough even though no heed be given the Italian. On the other hand, specialists will be able, whenever they choose, to verify any translation by referring to the standard Oxford Dante.

In making this book the author has often felt that his work might have been better had he been able to

consult such medieval manuscripts as have to do with his theme. Unhappily that kind of wealth is scant in the New World, and he who studies the past must do so where there was a past, or must do so at second hand.

Mr. Willard Fiske has endowed Cornell University with an incomparable collection of works on Dante. To this library the author went as an early and grateful pilgrim.

To others he would express more than a formula of prefatory gratitude; especially to Professor Henry Alfred Todd and to Professor Carlo Speranza for their lively interest in the work and for their gladly rendered help. To Professor Thomas R. Price the author is grateful for many suggestions as to matter and style. To one more scholar he would express his gratitude. Professor A. V. Williams Jackson voluntarily read the proofs and gave assistance of the highest value.

For the coloured miniatures thanks are due to Mrs. Beatrice Rossire, who made them after Zambrini's facsimiles of the illuminations in a manuscript of the fourteenth century.

An adequate bibliography will be found in the Notes.



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# DANTE AND THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

FROM Aristotle to Lucretius a slight advance was made in the study of nature. But, not long after Lucretius, the world-loving Romans fell, and in their stead there rose a new power whose aim was to save men from sin and help them to win everlasting life. For more than a thousand years the best minds of Europe bent most of their energies to the making of creeds and to the propagation of the Faith. The wave of culture that had swept toward the west from the shores of Hellas ebbed slowly out, and those brave truths which the Greek gods had inspired no prophets to deny seemed irrevocably lost.

Ignorance and war, famine and plagues, gave rise to such universal misery that men came to look upon the earth as little better than hell; but from all their woes, if they were loyal to the Faith, they were to be rescued by an all-powerful God. Why, then, waste their efforts in studying worldly things? Had God not revealed to His scribes the enigma as to how all things had arisen, and how all should end? Christendom answered yes, and the priesthood had grown strong

enough to threaten with the first and second death whoever was so impious as to doubt their interpretation of God's Word. Yet the puzzle of life's beginning and apparent end haunted men still; for the old spirit of inquiry had never died out, but lurked in the darkness like the fauns and satyrs whom men even now encountered in the dusk of the woods. Gradually there arose, not merely among laymen, but in the very bosom of the Church, minds suspicious that the whole truth was not yet known; yes, more than that, there grew up a belief that, after all, there might be some truth in other religions, and errors in the Faith. On the 6th of December, 1269, Étienne Tempier, Bishop of Paris, summoned the masters of theology and, 'in harmony with them, condemned thirteen propositions which were almost all only maxims of Averroism': that the intellect of men is one and the same; that there was never a first man; that the soul, which is the essence of a man, *secundum quod homo*, is dissolved with the body; that God recognises no single things; that human acts are not governed by divine providence; that God cannot give immortality, or save from corruption a corruptible or mortal thing.

In 1277 the Averroists had made bolder strides, for, in that year, the following propositions were condemned: that theological sermons are founded on fables; that nothing more is known by knowing theology; that there are fables and falsehoods in the Christian religion as in others; that the Christian religion hinders learning; that the only wise men are the philosophers; that there is no more excellent condition than to follow



philosophy; that no heed should be paid to the Faith if anything is called heretical.

The belief in Averroës' infidelity and blasphemy seems to have reached its height about 1300,<sup>1</sup> and it is astonishing that these heresies, which bear so directly upon the philosophy of the animal kingdom, should not have been condemned by Dante, who put Averroës, not among the heretics or Epicureans, but with Hippocrates, Galen, and Avicenna, in Limbo. Yet Dante disbelieved in all but one or two of the propositions condemned at Paris. Dante is indeed the greatest voice of orthodoxy in the Middle Ages, and his views as to the origin and destiny of the animal kingdom are never wittingly hostile to those of the Faith. Without a glint of suspicion he accepts the Scriptures, which he seems to have read from beginning to end.<sup>2</sup> But he also accepts the testimony of dreams,<sup>3</sup> and regards pagan literature as a source of truth hardly inferior to the divine.<sup>4</sup> Once he approves the experimental method<sup>5</sup> so hostile, and at last so fatal, to orthodoxy, but elsewhere bids men be content with the *quia*, — with knowing that things are as they are, — for, if men had been able to understand everything, there would have been no need for Mary to bear Christ.<sup>6</sup>

There is nothing in the *Divine Comedy* more significantly tragic than the fate of Ulysses. Like the

<sup>1</sup> RENAN, *Averroës et l'Averroïsme*, 3d ed., pp. 268–269, 299.

<sup>2</sup> *De Mon.* III, iv, 87–91; xiv, 27–32.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* XXVII, 92–93. *Conv.* II, ix, 101–113.

<sup>4</sup> Consider his attitude toward Aristotle and Virgil, and *De Monarchia*, *passim*. <sup>5</sup> *Parad.* II, 94 ff. <sup>6</sup> *Purg.* III, 37–45.

Genoese who, in the year 1291, sailed out toward the mysterious horizon and never reached home, that Greek wanderer, insatiate of knowledge, had ventured too far on the unknown, forbidden seas. He and his rash mariners beheld the glittering host of stars over the Mountain of Purgatory, but a storm smote them and they were swallowed up.<sup>1</sup>

The fate of Ulysses is like that of Adam and Eve, rashly tasting the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and cursed, even as the inquisitive Greek was divinely punished for having dared to sail to the 'uninhabited world.' Science stands here face to face with Revelation, confronting the priest who has issued a mandate from his shrine. Thus Ulysses — the Ulysses of Dante — is one of the first to give up his life for Science.

It may be clear now why Dante, great as he was, made no important contribution to zoölogy, to anthropology, or to any other science.<sup>2</sup> As a poet he imagined for the world objective portraits of men, and even of the lower animals, so truthful that they arouse more admiration now than ever before. The emotions and thoughts of the Middle Ages found their greatest interpreter in Dante, for he felt passionately, loved and hated with all his soul, shared in the strife and gentleness of his time, and heard myriad voices delivering up the secrets of myriad hearts. He wished to know all that could be

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXVI, 90-142; *Purg.* I, 130-132.

<sup>2</sup> This statement I intend to demonstrate at another time. That Dante made no contribution to zoölogy, save in the very dubious case of the mole, will be shown in this volume.

known, yet was never quite free of an awe that kept him from achieving still greater things than he achieved. He made no discoveries for science, yet knew all that the Trivium and Quadrivium could teach, and had an almost unequalled understanding of men. Taken for all in all, Dante is the most wonderful man of the Middle Ages, because he is their most perfect expression. In the world's literature where are we to find another poet who, witting or unwitting, has embodied in his works a complete philosophy of life, of the origin of things, of the earthly condition and destiny of beasts and men, of their dissolution and passage into the afterworld? All this Dante has done, and so fully that we find in him, not only the more scientific beliefs, but also the folklore and superstitions of the thirteenth and earlier centuries. But Dante's theories as to the great mysteries, and as to what science has a right to do, are medieval.

In Dante's time the words 'animal kingdom' meant far more and yet far less than now; for not only had the best minds failed to observe the infinite variation of actual forms, but had come to believe in a multitude of things that never existed. Thus, somewhere between the moon and the seat of God, were beings called angels, whose more or less ethereal existence sorely puzzled the theologians. On the angels alone they have written many volumes. Other volumes they devoted to the devils, who were very numerous and much more perplexing than the angels. Besides these there existed a host of fabulous creatures, such as the incombustible salamander, and as the caladrius, who fluttered over sick-beds and by his straightforward or averted glance fore-

told whether the patient was to live or die. All these uncouth creatures belong to the animal kingdom, for they are neither plants nor minerals.

Dante derived his knowledge of the animal kingdom largely from his own observation. His descriptions of falconry, for instance, have not a bookish origin. But the bulk of his knowledge can be traced to Aristotle, to the Latin classics—mostly to Virgil, Lucan, and Ovid,—to the Bible, and, finally, to a score of medieval encyclopedists, theologians, and makers of beast books. What Brunetto Latini says of his *Tresor* applies to most of the medieval encyclopedias, whose authors, unlike Brunetto, rarely acknowledge their debt. ‘And, sooth, I will not say that this book is extracted from my poor sense, nor from my bare science, but it is like a comb of honey culled from various flowers; for this book is compiled only of wondrous sayings of the authors who, before our time, have treated of philosophy, each according to the part he knew; for earthly man cannot know all, because philosophy is the root wherefrom grow all sciences that man can know.’

But the streams that flowed down to the encyclopedists from the ancient springs had not grown more limpid in their long and devious passage. The same lack of historical lore and of philosophical insight that transformed the heroes of old into knights errant, Virgil into an enchanter, and heaven into a feudal kingdom, brought it about also that the few approaches of Aristotle and some other great minds of antiquity to a true knowledge of the animals were almost forgotten, or converted slowly into fabulous shapes by fantasies unchecked by observa-



tion, by a credulity without bounds. With a few exceptions, such as Frederick of Swabia, an atheist to his contemporaries, and Albert the German,<sup>1</sup> of Bollstädt, boldly heretical at times in his frank blurting of what he had seen, there are to be found between Aristotle and Lamarck few thinkers in whom the spirit of experiment rules, who seek the truth without fear.

Albert of Bollstädt concedes to the lower animals memory, sagacity, shrewdness, foresight, and imagination, but denies them capacity for abstraction.<sup>2</sup> He was thus in advance of Dante. Frederick II, whose menageries were disliked by beggars and the populace,<sup>3</sup> wrote after his visit in the Orient a most remarkable work on ornithology, *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus*, an anomalous example of descriptive scientific literature in the thirteenth century. Instead of credulously copying the bestiaries and other unthinking, grotesquely superstitious works on natural history, he observes with his own eyes, draws judicious conclusions, and often rises to poetry by simply telling the truth. The royal sceptic is five hundred years ahead of his time. He rejects Aristotle's truly scholastic opinion that birds cry at night because they are weary of flying, and declares they do so rather to call their companions (lib. I, xx). His remarks often foreshadow the keenest researches of modern science;

<sup>1</sup> Albertus Magnus, as Professor H. A. Todd has suggested to me, means perhaps Albertus of Magna, *i.e.* 'la Magna,' 'l' Amagna,' or Germany. Dante calls Albertus Magnus 'Alberto della Magna,' *Conv.* III, v. 113.

<sup>2</sup> *De Animalibus*, lib. VIII, tract. vi, cap. 1, and XXI, i, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. RENAN, *Averroès*, p. 291, and VON RAUMER, *Geschichte der Hohenstaufen*, 2d ed., vol. III, p. 427.

for instance, that wings are in birds as arms in men and as the fore legs in quadrupeds (lib. I, xxvii). He discusses the anatomy of birds, their manner of feeding, their flight and migrations, with an accuracy and minuteness simply astounding. As a naturalist Frederick II surpassed both Albert the German and Dante. On the other hand, Dante as an artist not only excels in the main all his contemporaries and forerunners, but outshines the best writers of antiquity. Yet in his learning Dante laboured under enormous disadvantages. Many of the animals he mentions he could never have seen; why, then, should he not have believed in fiery adders and in the beaver that fishes with its tail? Again, he enjoyed no such privileges for study as wealth and royal power had given to Frederick, nor did he live in so wild a country as Germany.

What, now, is Dante's artistic attitude toward the lower animals? With a few exceptions, their existence interests him only in so far as it furnishes him imagery to make us comprehend the actions of men, of devils, and of angels, or in so far as the animals furnish lessons for the guidance of man. He neither loves nor portrays them wholly for their own sake. Almost six centuries had passed when they found their first great literary interpreter in Leconte de Lisle. Yet Dante is the most accurate artistic observer of his time. His will to be right is obvious in the smallest things; and see how he can blend science and poetry to make them one! He wishes not only to paint a scene, but to make unmistakably clear that it was in the setting of twilight.



*Nel tempo che colui che il mondo schiara  
La faccia sua a noi tien meno ascosa,  
Come la mosca cede alla zenzara.<sup>1</sup>*

In the hour when he who lights the world  
His face from us least hides, — when flies  
Are yielding to the gnat.

It is summer, then, and close to the hour of gnats. Flies are disappearing; for each insect must work and rest in Nature's great scheme of toil and sleep.

On the other hand, we find in Dante a curious use of certain lower animals, which was not, however, extraordinary then. Some of them, in more or less demoniacal form, he puts into Hell to offend or torture the damned. Hell to Dante was not a mere state of mind, but, like Purgatory and Heaven, a real place,<sup>2</sup> a part of the Ptolemaic system, as it had been to many another, and to St. Jerome.<sup>3</sup> That ferocious beasts, or wasps, reptiles, and other horrors, should continue there their earthly relation to man was natural, though Dante would probably not have introduced an infernal menagerie into any thoroughly orthodox hell.<sup>4</sup>

Under priestly guidance,<sup>5</sup> throughout the later Middle

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXVI, 26-28. (The *zenzara* is the common mosquito.)

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* II, 13-28; VI, 94-99; VII, 56-57; X, 10-12; XXXIV, 112-139. *Purg.* XXV, 79-108; XXVI, 12. *Parad.* XIV, 37-66.

<sup>3</sup> *Com. in Epist. ad Ephes.*, MIGNE, *Patrologia*, vol. 26, col. 531.

<sup>4</sup> For conceptions of a hell infested by loathsome animals, see DR. PAUL CARUS, *The History of the Devil and the Idea of Evil*, pp. 181-182.

<sup>5</sup> 'Non est imaginum structura pictorum inventio, sed ecclesiæ catholicæ probata legislatio et traditio,' *Maxima Bibliotheca Patrum*, XXVII, 325, cited by E. P. Evans.

Ages, painters and sculptors vied in filling Christendom with every kind of beast, bird, and monster that they could devise or that tradition had handed down from the pagan or the old Hebrew world. Not only in the Gothic regions, but throughout more classic Italy, the real, the half-real, or the utterly fabulous creatures of the animal kingdom swarmed, in wondrously coloured miniatures, in the beast books, in stories of adventure, in lives of the saints, in the blazons of petty nobles and of kings. More than in dwellings, they were carved on the walls of cathedrals, in that age when thoughts could be so readily turned into stone. Never was there a time when creatures not men had so wide and curious a hold on the fancy of moralisers and of those who carried out their commands. If we would appreciate that age we must somehow contrive to cast off for a while our deeper knowledge of the animal world. We must believe again in the magic power of the basilisk, in the kingly discernment of the lion, in the evil eye of the wolf and his inflexible neck, in the sweet breath of the panther, and the dolphin's friendship for man. We must become the subtle, yet credulous, children of the thirteenth century. Not only that, but more; we must cease to believe ourselves the common sharers of natural law, imagining once more that the world was created for us alone; yet, in that very exclusion, we must regard our fellows in the animal kingdom as having a spiritual significance. They must become tokens of the vices or virtues of this world and of the world to come. The dove, the panther, the pelican, or the griffin must once more symbolise the Holiest of men; or, on the other

hand, what is horrible, degrading, unpardonable, must be figured in the viper, the dragon, the toad, — in some creature whose nature has inspired men from time immemorial with disgust or fear, revealing to him, through a perverted philosophy, works of evil, in truth or fancy, like his own. If we can achieve this task, we shall have begun to live in the medieval world of Dante.

## CHAPTER II

### MAN

DANTE ALIGHIERI believed our earth to be a motionless globe<sup>1</sup> in the midst of nine spheres,<sup>2</sup> revolved by Intelligences called angels.<sup>3</sup> Surrounding these nine spheres is the motionless Empyrean, wherein is God, from whom all being comes.<sup>4</sup> At the centre of the earth was the bottom of Hell,<sup>5</sup> the point to which all weights are drawn.<sup>6</sup> At the summit of our hemisphere stood Jerusalem,<sup>7</sup> and exactly opposite were the Antipodes, or rather the Terrestrial Paradise, and this was surrounded by sea.<sup>8</sup>

In the Terrestrial Paradise God created Adam,<sup>9</sup> for Adam was not born. Adam was created on the sixth day, and God's reason for beginning mankind was to offset the loss suffered in Heaven by the fall of about a tithe of the angels, who sinned almost as soon as they were created.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* XXII, 133-138. *Conv.* III, v, 53-65.

<sup>2</sup> *Conv.* II, vi, 99-102.

<sup>5</sup> *Inf.* XXXII, 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Conv.* II, ii, 48-65.

<sup>6</sup> *Inf.* XXXIV, 110-111.

<sup>4</sup> *Conv.* III, vi, 46. *Epist.* X, xx, xxi. <sup>7</sup> *Inf.* XXXIV, 113-115.

<sup>8</sup> *Parad.* IX, 84. Cf. B. LATINI, *Tresor*, p. 151, 'Terre est ceinte et environnée de mer . . . ce est la grant mer qui est apelée Oceane.'

<sup>9</sup> *Purg.* I, 22-24; XXVIII, 91-94. *Tresor*, p. 161, 'En Inde est Paradis terrestre. . . Et sachiez que après le pechié dou premier home cest leus fu clos a touz autres.' Cf. *Purg.* I, 130-132.

<sup>10</sup> *Conv.* II, vi, 95-99. See chapter on 'The Angels,' p. 26.

Unlike that of the brutes and plants, man's soul is the breath of God; for, as soon as the articulation of the brain is perfect, God, the 'first mover,' joyfully turns to the unborn child and breathes into it a new spirit full of virtue.<sup>1</sup> Thus come immortality and that intelligence which sets man over the other animals.

Not every one believed in immortality in Dante's time. It is safe to say that in no earlier medieval epoch had so many leaders disbelieved in another life. Boccaccio records that Guido Cavalcanti held more or less the opinion of the Epicureans, and that when he came pondering among the common folk they said he was seeking to prove there was no God. Ottaviano degli Ubaldini — 'the Cardinal' — is reported<sup>2</sup> to have said, 'If there is a soul, I have lost it a thousand times for the Ghibellines'; and Frederick II, according to Villani,<sup>3</sup> lived almost like an Epicurean, deeming that there was no other life, and this was one chief reason why he fell out with the clerics and with Holy Church. These three great men were put by Dante into Hell with Epicurus; yet Dante betrays that he, too, had meditated anxiously on the mystery of an after life, for he is not quite content to believe the Faith and seek no farther, but appeals to the testimony of dreams, and cries out that of all 'bestialities' the stupidest, vilest, and most pernicious is to believe that after this life there is no other.<sup>4</sup> He cites Aristotle *On the Soul*, Cicero *On Old Age*, and even

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* VII, 139. *Purg.* XXV, 37-60, and comment of H. F. TOZER in *An English Commentary to Dante's Divina Commedia*, Oxford, 1901.

<sup>2</sup> By Benvenuto da Imola.

<sup>3</sup> VI, 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Conv.* II, ix, 49 ff.



the 'laws,' that is, the religions, of Jews, Tartars, and Saracens. But for the lower animals death is the end. Toward them Dante seems to have had a certain tenderness at times, but his sympathy is mainly conventional, and he expresses nowhere a word of regret for their fate, nor for their sufferings.

If, now, the divine animal, man, is immortal, why does he die? In the apocryphal Book of Wisdom (II, 24) it is said that 'through envy of the devil came death into the world,' and St. Paul utters the same theory, declaring that as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Dante quotes<sup>1</sup> this sentence of St. Paul, but follows it up with sufficient obscurity to make one a little uncertain as to whether he believed that we should have lived on forever in the bliss of Eden had Adam not sinned. It is highly probable that Dante held such a belief. But what does he mean by the 'second death'? As to this there should be no mystery. The essence of Dante's conception of death is that the soul, having left the body, passes into Heaven, Purgatory, or Hell. There is no cessation of life. Indeed, the soul, unable to die, must enjoy the rapturous peace of Heaven or endure the sufferings of Hell through all eternity. The second death is not annihilation, but it is God's award to those who have not lived righteously according to the standard of Dante and of Mother Church.<sup>2</sup> All this is

<sup>1</sup> *De Mon.* II, xiii, 7-11. Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE, *De Civ. Dei*, XIII, I, 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* I, 117. *Epist.* VI, 29. Cf. LACTANTIUS, *De Origine Erroris*, lib. II, cap. 13: ('Quare duo sexus in homine: quid sit mors eius



true of man, but the brute's soul dies altogether, and if dogs, wasps, serpents, and other animals are found in Dante's Hell, they are there to satisfy a tradition that had been born with the earliest conception of a hell. More than that, they fulfil an esthetic necessity. Dante believed in a real Hell wherein man suffers by means of a ghostlike body till after Judgment Day, when he may resume his own; but there is no good ground for supposing that Dante had other than poetic notions as to the presence of any lower animal in Hell or Purgatory.

Man is immortal because he can reason. The *intellectus possibilis*, or mind capable of growth, which renders him the most perfect of the animals, is a special dispensation of the Creator.<sup>1</sup> Having lost reason, man becomes a 'beast.' Not only has man the potential intellect. He has, also, free will, — the greatest gift of God to man, and to man alone and to the angels was free will given. There exists even such a thing as absolute free will.<sup>2</sup> Psychology was in its childhood in Dante's time. The schoolmen, slaves to a pedantic vocabulary, followed in ruts frozen hard as stone. The best of them, as St. Thomas Aquinas and Dante (for Dante, too, is often a schoolman), had little capacity to discern the infinite variations, blendings, evolutions of thoughts and things, but blocked off their philosophy into squares. They seem never to have perceived how infinitesimally small is the proportion of acts attributable to free will, nor could they develop any sound theory, hampered as they

prima, quid secunda,' etc.): ' . . . Eam poenam secundam mortem nominavimus, quæ est et ipsa perpetua, sicut et immortalitas,' etc.

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* V, 19-24.

<sup>2</sup> *Parad.* IV, 76, 109.

were by the dogma that man is the reasoning animal. Their psychology was wholly anthropocentric, and was spun, like the spider's web, out of their own bowels. The system of St. Thomas is as clear as crystal and could be shattered as easily, and Dante, as a theorising psychologist, differs in no essential way from the theological, anthropocentric tenets of the Angelic Doctor. It was as a poet, not as a theologian, that the greatest of Italians looked with unclouded eyes upon nature.

Dante maintained the dogma that the will is free, yet recognised not only predestination, Providence, heredity, and environment, but also miraculous interference and the influence of the stars. God keeps watch over men, and when their works displease him he steps in and sets things right again. He knew that some of the angels were to 'fall' a moment after their creation; knowing, also, that Satan would mislead Adam and Eve, he made Hell betimes to be ready for their sinful progeny.

DINANZI A ME NON FUR COSE CREATE  
SE NON ETERNE, ED IO ETERNO DURO.

These words Dante read over the portal of Hell. When Rome's capitol was almost in the power of the Gauls, God saved his favoured race and thwarted the Gauls by the warning cry of a goose 'that had never been seen there before.'<sup>1</sup> So, too, Regulus, Cincinnatus, and Camillus acted at God's instigation,<sup>2</sup> and God 'took a hand' when the Romans were fighting the Albans, even as Jahveh, when his other chosen people were faring ill,

<sup>1</sup> See chapter on 'The Goose,' p. 315.

<sup>2</sup> *Conv.* IV, v, 124-139.

had stopped the sun. Dante had a theory as to the reign of law; so had St. Thomas, but law had to cease where miracle began.

Not only has the deity of Dante's philosophy an incessant interest in the affairs of man,<sup>1</sup> but man himself is able to influence the actions of God. In Heaven there are special pleaders who have their wards, their god-children on earth, for whose sake they change the mind of God and soften his judgments.<sup>2</sup>

Man is at his best almost an angel through intelligence and free will, but he is also at another moment almost the plaything of Fortune. Were not Dante the poet and Dante the dogmatist so often at odds, we should wonder at his almost heathen conception of Necessity (*saeva necessitas*, ἀνάγκη)<sup>3</sup> driving on Fortune, whom he lauds by putting into the mouth of Virgil words that Boethius had uttered in his *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*.<sup>4</sup>

‘O Master mine ! still more would I be told ;  
This Fortune whom thou mentionest, what is she  
Who seems all riches in her clutch to hold ?’  
‘Poor creatures !’ he exclaimed, ‘how blind are ye !  
Through what excess of ignorance ye fall !  
Would ye might learn from this discourse of ours,  
That He, whose wisdom, so transcending all,  
Gave to the heavens He framed, presiding powers,  
That sphere to sphere might each responsive shine,

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* IV, v, 155-176; II, xiii, 30-33. *Epist.* VI, 1-8, and *De Mon.*, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* II, 94-96, 123-125.

<sup>3</sup> See A. GRAF, *La Credenza nella Fatalità in Miti, Leggende e Superstizioni del Medio Evo*. As to predestination, cf. *Epist.* V, 116-119, with THOS. AQUINAS, *Summa*, Pr. pars, qu. xxiii, art. 1.

<sup>4</sup> II *Metr.* i, 2, and *Pros.* i, 2. See comment of Tozer.

And every part with equal radiance beam,  
 So to earth's glories also did assign  
 One general guide and guardian power supreme !  
 She in due turn wealth's empty dower translates  
 From race to race, from blood to blood, unchecked ;  
 Hence come the glory and decay of states,  
 Obeying all a power whom none suspect ;  
 For like a serpent in the grass concealed,  
 While mortal wisdom 'gainst her fights in vain,  
 She, even as other gods their sceptres wield,  
 Disposes, guides and regulates her reign.  
 No truce to her mutations is allowed ;  
 Necessity compels her to move fast,  
 So thick the claimants to her bounty crowd ;  
 She 'tis at whom such mangling terms are cast ;  
 Even those who most should praise blaspheme her most,  
 But her their curses little can annoy,  
 For blest is she, and with her fellow host,  
 The first-created, whirls her sphere in joy.' <sup>1</sup> — PARSONS.

What has now become of that free will which makes man so much like the angels? Yet Dante at no other time came so close to pagan fatalism, and we must study him more to find the range of his philosophy. In the *Banquet* he fiercely inveighs at the injustice of Fortune, affirming that the imperfection of riches is to be noted in the recklessness of the way they come, in which no distributive justice shines, but iniquity almost always.<sup>2</sup> Again, in the treatise *De Monarchia*,<sup>3</sup> he says the ancients called Fortune what we call Providence, and once goes so far as to attribute to

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* VII, 67-96. 'Whirls' (= *volve*) is my emendation for 'fills.'  
<sup>2</sup> *Conv.* IV, xi, 51-55.  
<sup>3</sup> *De Mon.* II, x, 70-72.



Aristotle the opinion that the more man is subject to intellect the less he is subject to Fortune.<sup>1</sup> From this chaos we can at least draw the conclusion that Fortune plays havoc with the reign of law.

Between Dante Alighieri's borrowed theories as to Fortune and his theories on the influence of the stars there is no dividing line, nor is there any other originality than that imparted by Dante's genius for expression in his astrological philosophy. Mostly through the Arabs, astrological teachings had, even before Dante's time, been closely allied to surgery and medicine. At Bologna astrology was a regular faculty of the University, and Cecco d'Ascoli, author of the *Acerba*, and an intellectual adversary of Dante, long held that chair. But astrology, in determining the influences of the stars on the life of man, was ever hovering close to the border-land of necromancy, and sometimes crossed the line. Both in recognising in man a temperamental kinship with the stars and in damning those who had dealt in the Black Art, Dante agrees with the orthodoxy of his time; and the burning of Cecco by the Florentine Inquisition, in 1327, would have seemed to Dante a just meed for 'magic frauds.'

Between the astrological lore of Ibn-Roschd (Averroës) and that of Dante there was no essential differ-

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* IV, xi, 83-85. ARISTOTLE, *Ethics*, X, 9, describes intellectual man as the favourite of the gods, but see MOORE, *Studies*, I, p. 253. St. Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle both take the rational view that nothing really happens by chance, but that many things happen 'per accidens' without the ken of man. See comment of St. Thomas on *Physic. Arist.* lib. II, lec. 9. This does not disagree with miracles wrought by God.

ence, for each believed in the Intelligences arranged in hierarchies, and each believed that the planets or stars (for the name varies) had an effect on man's destiny.<sup>1</sup> 'If thou followest thy star,' says Brunetto Latini to Dante, 'thou canst not fail of a glorious haven, if I paid good heed in the beautiful life; and had I not died so soon, seeing the heaven so benign to thee, I would have given thee comfort for thy work.'<sup>2</sup> What better evidence is needed that Brunetto had cast the horoscope for the youthful Dante?

Dante's belief in the influence of the stars never dwindled into incredulity,<sup>3</sup> and never went so far (to his thinking) as to interfere with the dogma of free will.<sup>4</sup> The stars give tendencies before and after birth; for Venus fosters loving, and astral influences cause one child to be born a Solon, another a Xerxes, another an Esau.<sup>5</sup>

As man is born under a star which influences his destiny, so he is in the care of Nature in the broader sense; and Nature is, on the whole, benignant toward man. Nature made Hippocrates for the animals she

<sup>1</sup> Cf. RASHDALL, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, vol. I, p. 244. As to temperamental kinship with the stars, cf. ALEX. NECKAM, *De septem donis et septem planetis*, Wright's ed., p. 39 ff. For an analysis of Ibn-Roschd's system, see RENAN, *Averroès et l'Averroïsme*, p. 120 ff. Of Averroës, Benv. da Imola says, 'Averroës non scivit astrologiam; sed astra non mentiuntur.' For an analysis of Dante's system, consult F. PAOLO LUISO, '*Struttura Morale e Poetica del Paradiso Dantesco*,' in *Rassegna Nazionale*, for July 16, 1898.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XV, 55-60.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* XX, 13-14, shows Dante's belief at its weakest.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* XVI, 67-71.

<sup>5</sup> *Purg.* XXX, 109-117. *Parad.* VIII, 112-148.



holds most dear; and Nature had a wise intent when she left off making giants.<sup>1</sup>

Two great zoölogical puzzles stirred the theologians: How could so many animals as they knew have got into the ark? And how could a good God have made so many noxious beasts?—for those of a certain craft considered then, as now, that the world was made wholly for man, and that all the animals were meant to serve him. The first difficulty was obviated by enlarging the ark.<sup>2</sup> The second was explained away in various fashions. Peter Damian dedicated to the monks of Monte Cassino a treatise *De bono religiosi status et variorum animantium tropologia*, which, as Gaspary says, is nothing else than one of the oldest allegorical beast books. ‘Nature changes, for the theologian, into a mistress of moral science. God, according to Damian, endowed the animals with their forces and qualities to the end that man, from the contemplation and explanation of them, may derive precepts for the salvation of his soul.’<sup>3</sup> Such a theory does away with the superfluous animals. St. Augustine says: ‘I confess I am ignorant why mice and frogs were created, or flies and worms. . . . All creatures are either useful, hurtful, or superfluous to us. . . . As for the hurtful creatures, we are either punished, or disciplined, or terrified by them, so that we may not cherish and love their life.’<sup>4</sup> These or like doctrines held sway in

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XXVIII, 97–102; XXIX, 136–138. *Inf.* XXXI, 49–57. *Conv.* III, xii, 59 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. D. WHITE, *Warfare of Science with Theology*, I, 31, 54.

<sup>3</sup> A. GASPARY, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, I, 29.

<sup>4</sup> *De Genesi, de Trinitate, passim*, cited by White.

Christendom for nearly eighteen hundred years, and hold sway still over the majority, who have not yet learned that various creatures appeared on our globe ages before man, and that everything, from the rattlesnake to a hundred thousand mysterious beings under the sea, from the lacerating nettle to the loveliest rose, exists without divine reference to man; that man battled with other animals for untold ages before he got a few of them into his power; and that now, as of old, millions of species exist that have nothing to do with man. Neither were they created to furnish material for sermons, nor, as used to be thought, to embody the Evil One, but exist, each and every one, for their own sake alone. And that very science which has afforded mankind a defence against 'noxious beasts' and sickening germs has also taught the more intelligent part of us to look upon Nature kindly, and to wonder, with truly religious reverence, at her infinite complexity and the never ceasing reign of law.

Dante Alighieri uttered only a few words bearing on the noxious and superfluous beasts. He says of the giants:—

Sure, Nature, when her hand forebore the skill  
To make such monsters, had a wise intent,  
Taking from Mars those ministers of ill;  
And if she do not of her whales repent,  
And elephants, who closely thinks will find  
That she herein a just discretion shows:  
For, were ill will and strength gifted with mind,  
Vainly would men such argument oppose.<sup>1</sup>

— PARSONS.

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXXI, 49-57.

Here the theory as to the 'noxious beasts' lingers still, but in a form modified, perhaps, by the inevitable choice of the hugest, rather than of the most ferocious, animals known.

Dante had a vague theory on what we now call the struggle for life. 'Every animal,' he writes, 'as soon as born, both rational and brute, loves itself, fearing and shunning those things which are contrary to itself, and hates them.' And Dante recognises one feature of the differentiation of species by adding that there begins among animals a dissimilarity in the advance of this instinct, for one goes one road, one goes another.<sup>1</sup>

The most important of Dante's tenets hang upon the legend of Adam. Dante, as we have seen, held that Adam and Eve began life in the Terrestrial Paradise opposite Jerusalem. Since the Terrestrial Paradise was completely surrounded by sea, how did Adam's offspring and the animals arrive in Europe and otherwise spread over the earth? In his treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, Dante affirms that God chastised the builders of Babel by making them speak as many languages as there were kinds of artisans; and to this confusion he attributes the dispersion of mankind.<sup>2</sup> That the root of human progeny was planted in the East, but that after Babel mankind were scattered over the earth,<sup>3</sup> agrees well enough with the theory as to the situation of the Terrestrial Paradise; but when Dante says that men came at length to the West, wherefore then for the first time some or all of the rivers of Europe slaked the thirst of rational throats,

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* IV, xxii, 48-56.

<sup>2</sup> *De V. E.* I, vii, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> *De V. E.* I, viii, *ad init.*

one is prone to inquire what had become of the throats that were not rational. Perplexity changes to suspicion when Dante says that men brought with them a three-fold language, 'whether they came, then, for the first as strangers or were returning to Europe as indigenes.' How could they have been indigenes of Europe if they originated in Adam?

Mankind became frail through the sin of Adam. No wonder, therefore, that mankind was so ready to sin again at the persuasion of the giant Nimrod, who was really responsible for the building of Babel and the consequent confusion of tongues.<sup>1</sup> Why did God at the beginning grant speech to man, and why was speech not given to the angels and to the lower animals? Speech was given to men in order that they might exchange ideas. The lower animals, devoid as they were of reason, had no need of language. Dante disposes of Ovid's magpies by saying that Ovid was speaking figuratively. 'It is false that any birds speak, for such an act is not speech, but, as it were, an imitation of the human voice.' As to the serpent that tempted Eve, we learn that its organs were so operated by the devil that a voice resulted like true speech. It is interesting to learn from what Dante says later that the serpent must have spoken Hebrew. Balaam's ass, on the other hand, could not have protested had her organs not been operated by an angel. Yet neither angels nor devils have a language. The angels need none because they know everything through God; the devils have none, for in order to make their perfidy known to one another

<sup>1</sup> *De V. E.* I, vii, 1-33.



they need only to know each of the other that he exists and what is his rank ; which they do know, for they knew one another before their fall.<sup>1</sup> It seems that medieval thinkers differed in this matter ; for Richalmus, a Cistercian, credits them with knowing Latin,<sup>2</sup> and it would be easy to show from contemporary documents that they knew and could speak every idiom in Europe, though they often did so with a certain huskiness, or even whinnying.

Of all Dante's seriously propounded quilllets and quodlibets as to man's place in nature almost nothing remains. They have slowly faded from the minds of thinking men, and in their stead have come theories founded, not on the turning of a verbal kaleidoscope, but on the fearless study of all those great truths that exist for those who know how to find them ; not in oracles, but in the bosom of the earth, and in the millions of creatures whose complexity is everywhere and always governed by law.

<sup>1</sup> *De V. E.* I, ii, *passim*. Cf. *Conv.* III, vii, 101-124.

<sup>2</sup> Cap. LXIII. Cf. p. 31, n. 5.



From a MS. of the 'Hortus Deliciarum,' XII century. After Didron

## CHAPTER III

### THE ANGELS

GOD created all the angels, both the good and the bad,<sup>1</sup> but the good alone he created intentionally; the wickedness of the bad angels arose outside of God's design. Nevertheless he foresaw their wickedness.<sup>2</sup> Those that fell became demons, and they must have numbered thousands.<sup>3</sup> Those that were loyal continued in their various hierarchies to move the nine heavens, and thence they exert a certain influence on the destiny of men.<sup>4</sup>

These angels are 'substance separated from matter'<sup>5</sup> (a scholastic subtlety), and are diaphanous.<sup>6</sup> Through

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* VII, 130-132; XXIX, 22-33.      <sup>2</sup> *Conv.* III, xii, 66-72.

<sup>3</sup> *Parad.* XXIX, 49-63.    *Conv.* II, vi, 95-98.    *Inf.* VIII, 82 ff.

<sup>4</sup> See chapter on 'Man,' pp. 19-20.

<sup>6</sup> *Conv.* III, vii, 47-50.

<sup>5</sup> *Conv.* II, v, 4-8.    Cf. *Parad.* IV, 46-48.



the mirror God they know all things ; nor do they need language, for they have an ineffable and ready sufficiency of understanding.<sup>1</sup> They have also immutable free will.<sup>2</sup> So much for theology. What, now, are the poet's ideas ?

Remote though angels are, they sympathise, not with Jews nor Saracens, but with Christians, and seek to defend them from evil.<sup>3</sup> An angel of God saved Buonconte from a demon,<sup>4</sup> and when Virgil and Dante were hampered and almost dismayed by a band of fiends, there came flying to the rescue through the dank thick gloom of Hell an angel.

I saw above a thousand ruined souls  
Flying from one who passed the Stygian bog,  
With feet unmoistened by the sludgy wave ;  
Oft from his face his left hand pushed the fog  
Whose weight alone, it seemed, annoyance gave.  
At once the messenger of heaven I kenned,  
And toward my master turned who made a sign  
That hushed I should remain and lowly bend.  
Ah me, how full he looked of scorn divine !

He reached the portals ; with a little rod  
Touched them : unbolted, instantly, they flew ;  
Then, on the horrid threshold as he trod,  
'O Heaven-expelled !' he 'gan, 'accursed crew !  
What frantic pitch of insolence is this ?  
Why vainly kick against the Will supreme,  
Whose mighty aim was never known to miss,  
Who to your pangs adds oft a new extreme ?'<sup>5</sup>

— PARSONS.

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* III, vii, 46-64. *De V. E.* I, ii, 12-22.

<sup>2</sup> *De Mon.* I, xii, 30-37.

<sup>3</sup> *Epist.* VIII, iii, 33-38.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* V, 104.

<sup>5</sup> *Inf.* IX, 79-96.

This rescuing angel seems to have a human body. He speaks, and also carries a fairy wand. Thomas Aquinas declares that angels have not by nature bodies united to themselves, but may assume them, as when angels appeared to Lot and the men of Sodom. Thus they may seem to be living bodies but they are not so; nor do they really speak by means of the assumed body, but it is something like speech in so far as they form sounds in the air like human voices.<sup>1</sup> It would be hard to find a more lucid explanation than this of the Angelic Doctor.

Although the angel seemed to fly, yet Dante says nothing about wings. Elsewhere, however, he beheld such an angel as painters fancy—an angel with wings like a swan's,<sup>2</sup> white wings, of course, for in Dante's time no European had seen any but white swans.<sup>3</sup> His angels are often dazzling, are 'lights,' 'splendours,' 'fires.'<sup>4</sup> Some—and they are seraphim—have six wings with which they make for themselves a cowl.<sup>5</sup> Most curious of all are those angels that Dante saw driving away the serpent from a garden in Purgatory, —most curious, for they wore garments green as new-born leaves, and green feathers in their wings.

I saw that army of the gentle-born  
 Thereafterward in silence upward gaze  
 As if in expectation, pale and humble ;  
 And from on high come forth and down descend,

<sup>1</sup> *Summa*, Pr. pars, qu. li, art. 1, 3; qu. lii, art. 1, 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* XIX, 46.

<sup>3</sup> See chapter on 'The Swan,' p. 299.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* XV, 26. *Parad.* XIV, 34; XXII, 46; XXIII, 28.

<sup>5</sup> *Parad.* IX, 77-78. Scartazzini cites Isaiah vi, 2, 3.

I saw two angels with two flaming swords —  
Truncated and deprived of their points,  
Green as the little leaflets just now born  
Their garments were, which by their verdant pinions  
Beaten and blown abroad, they trailed behind.  
One just above us came to take his station,  
And one descended to the opposite bank,  
So that the people were contained between them.  
Clearly in them discerned I the blond head ;  
But in their faces was the eye bewildered,  
As faculty confounded by excess.<sup>1</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

When Dante wrote these words the Byzantine period had passed, and Cimabue and Giotto were painting angels more like men from the waist upward, but for spirituality's sake deprived them of feet. In the *Vita Nuova*<sup>2</sup> Dante says that he was busy one day drawing an angel, when he looked up and saw worthy men watching him. After they had gone he returned to his work, that is, of drawing angels. What were they? Had they feet? Were they naked? or clad, like all the angelic figures of Cimabue and Giotto? Had they beards or other evidence of sex? We shall never know, and yet it would not be amiss to suppose that they were naïve figures, winged fantasies, but far less spiritual than the angels limned with a goose quill on the first manuscript of the *Divina Commedia*.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* VIII, 22-36.

<sup>2</sup> § 35.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DEVIL AND HIS BROOD<sup>1</sup>

*Io udi' già dire a Bologna<sup>2</sup>  
Del Diavol vizii assai, tra i quali udi'  
Ch' egli è bugiardo, e padre di menzogna.<sup>3</sup>*

By the year 1300 the Devil was in his prime. Miniaturists painted him in as many shapes as tradition sanctioned or imagination could devise. Hewn in stone, he still haunts the spires and balconies of the great Gothic cathedrals. Men fear him no longer, but he, being of stone, still leers over towns and cities as in the days when he shared with God the ever ripening harvest of souls. Through the Devil's pride came his fall and the

<sup>1</sup> The reader may like to consult the following useful and interesting works on Demonology: ARTURO GRAF, *Il Diavolo*, Milan, 3d ed., 1890 (delightful, but fails to give sources), also his *Demonologia di Dante*, in *Miti, Leggende e Superstizioni del Medio Evo*, Turin, 1893; DR. PAUL CARUS, *The History of the Devil and the Idea of Evil*, London and Chicago, 1900 (scientific and richly illustrated); ANDREW D. WHITE, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology*, especially chapter on 'Possession,' and chapter entitled, 'From the "Prince of the Power of the Air" to Meteorology,' New York, 1898. ROSKOFF, *Geschichte des Teufels*, Leipzig, 1869, is rather antiquated and makes dull reading.

<sup>2</sup> Giovanni Villani says that Dante went to Bologna. Cf. what Dante says in *Conv.* I, iii, 20-33.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXIII. 142-144.



fall of man.<sup>1</sup> 'Through envy of the Devil came death into the world.' Men had free will, yet he was the cause of their sins.<sup>2</sup> Men were fondly watched by God and his angels, but the Devil contrived somehow to get at last the greater part of mankind, whom he carried off to a region of ingenious sufferings that should never end. Not only was he the Tempter, but he brought diseases, poverty, drought, and storms.<sup>3</sup> Though Hell was his lair, the Devil roved wherever there were men;<sup>4</sup> sometimes in the shape of a monster, sometimes as a man or embodied in the likeness of a noxious beast, he sought his prey.<sup>5</sup> There were few or none he had not tempted. By many visionaries, and by churchmen whose word is worthy of equal trust, he had actually been seen. Who will doubt such authorities as St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and Luther?

The Devil, then, existed and was greedy for men's souls. But how did he make shift to get them? Had he in general a real body made of 'dust' like yours and mine? Or was he incorporeal? How much intelligence had he? Could he speak and converse with other devils and with men? The opinions of the theologians differed considerably on all these points, though all — to a monk

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* XXIX, 55-56.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XXXIV, 36. *De Mon.* III, iii, 47.

<sup>3</sup> See A. D. WHITE, *op. cit.* I, 323-372; II, 27-30.

<sup>4</sup> Lactantius, in MIGNE, *Patrologia*, vol. 6, col. 332.

<sup>5</sup> Richalmus (1270 A.D.) opined that devils take on the shapes that fit their enterprises. See PEZII, *Thesaurus Anec. novis.*, t. I, pars ii, col. 376 seq.; *Beati Richalmi . . . Abbatis ord. Cist. liber Revelationum de insidiis et versutiis Dæmonium adv. Homines.* See ROSKOFF, *op. cit.* I, 305, 342, and St. Jerome, MIGNE, *Patrologia*, vol. 26, col. 530 and 531.



—believed that he existed.<sup>1</sup> That was the pivotal idea on which all theories swung.

In the Middle Ages every sin was conceived by many to have its special demon; so Dante sets over the various realms of Hell fiends whose habits match the wickedness of the damned.<sup>2</sup> His fiends, however, are never beautiful, as they so often seemed to those they tempted on earth; but we come upon them, naked and horrible, in their own domain, wherein, all occasion for temptation being absent, they have no reason to assume bewitching forms. Dante's fiends are not abstractions of evil, but correspond corporeally to what various devils of folklore and ancient mythology had come to be in his time.

How came there to be demons? One answer, from theology's point of view, is naïve and plain. Inspired by pride, Satan raised his brows against his Maker.<sup>3</sup> For this he was cast out of Heaven with a host of rebellious or neutral angels, so soon after his creation that you could not count twenty. As these angels had been arranged in orders before the fall, so, afterward, they maintained a kind of system. Dante's fiends hardly seem to rove at will, but rather to be set over special regions of Hell.

Nearly all his greater devils, such as Charon, Minos, Cerberus, Pluto, the Furies, the Minotaur, the Centaurs, the Harpies, and the Giants except Nimrod, had figured as demigods or demons in Græco-Roman mythology.

<sup>1</sup> One offence laid at the door of Averroës was that he did not believe in the devil. See RENAN, *Averroës et l'Averroïsme*, p. 299.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theol.* Pr. pars, sec., qu. cix, art. 1 and 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXXIV, 35.

The early fathers, following the sentence of St. Paul, made the gods of the Gentiles devils.<sup>1</sup> To these we may add certain demoniacal beasts ; for such are Dante's ounce, lion, wolf, and also his black bitches, his serpents, his dragon, as well as certain gadflies, and wasps that torture the sluggards.<sup>2</sup>

Though Dante, in his treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia*,<sup>3</sup> denies that devils speak, in the *Divina Commedia* he not only endows them with language, but lends them keen wits, as we shall see. Minos expresses his opinion with his tail, Cerberus barks, the Minotaur is dumb, so is Geryon ; Lucifer busies his three mouths crunching three traitors ; but most of the other devils speak, and one of them is a logician.<sup>4</sup>

Hardly had the two poets entered through the awful Gate when they drew near to those sinners who had lived without infamy or honour. They were mingled with the wretched band of those that were neutral when Lucifer fell.<sup>5</sup> The out-and-out rebels were met at the gate of Dis, whither Dante and Virgil had been ferried by Phlegyas across the Stygian pool. How these fiends look, Dante fails to say ; but there were more than a thousand that had rained down from heaven, and they wrathfully tried to keep the two poets from going farther.<sup>6</sup> It is of these that St. Augustine wrote as follows : 'That some angels sinned and were thrust into the

<sup>1</sup> See, also, Vulgate and all early versions of Ps. xcvi, 5 ; and GRAF, *Demonologia di Dante*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>2</sup> See separate chapters on these various animals.

<sup>3</sup> I, ii, 22-33.

<sup>5</sup> *Inf.* III, 37-42.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* XXVII, 122-123.

<sup>6</sup> *Inf.* VIII, 82-130.

lower part of this world which is to them as a prison even to the final damnation to come on Judgment Day, the Apostle Peter shows clearly by saying that God will not spare the sinning angels, but thrusting them into the prisons of nether darkness he will give them over to be punished on Judgment Day.' By whom? The query is hard to answer. Dante's fiends are all wrathful, and often quarrel, but seem to relish their business, which they ply with an energy not outdone even in the heyday of the Inquisition.

Dante's fallen angels, however, show a sense of justice and are keen in making the penalty fit the crime. Seducers and panders, for instance, are scourged by horned demons. But why are they horned? Could not some other kind have handled the scourge as well? Horns were worn in the Bacchic orgies,<sup>1</sup> and have been the emblem time out of mind of those who have sullied conjugal honour.<sup>2</sup> This is why Dante saw horned demons lashing seducers and panders with great whips.

This side and that, along the livid stone  
Beheld I horned demons with great scourges,  
Who cruelly were beating them behind.  
Ah me ! how they did make them lift their legs  
At the first blows ! and sooth not any one  
The second waited for, nor for the third.<sup>3</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

<sup>1</sup> OVID, *Met.* IV, 19. CATULLUS, LXIV, 263.

<sup>2</sup> CAHIER (*Mélanges*, II, 35) reproduces a design of 1255 A.D., which shows Charity holding in her left hand a turtle dove, emblem of conjugal fidelity. Beneath is a shameless woman astride a he-goat labelled 'LUXURE.'

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XVIII, 34-39.

Other demons have gaffs with which they hook sinners bobbing in a pool.<sup>1</sup> The Centaurs shoot arrows at any one that emerges from the boiling blood;<sup>2</sup> and the schismatics, such as Mahomet and Bertran de Born, are forever being ripped open by sworded devils.<sup>3</sup> Not only have these devils gaffs, swords, and arrows, but their own claws or other unnamed weapons with which they render eternal life unutterably dreadful for the damned.

In Antenora, — a pit of the traitor's hell, — Dante grasped one sinner by the hair, saying, 'Tell who thou art or not a hair shall stay.' 'Though thou make me bald, I'll never tell thee.' With barks of pain the sinner, fearing recognition, kept his eyes stubbornly bent down, and Dante had already twisted and pulled out more than one shock when another cried: —

'What doth ail thee, Bocca ?

Is it not enough to clatter with thy jaws

But thou must bark ? What devil touches thee ?'<sup>4</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

It is probable that Dante meant to have devils in most parts of his hell, for here are devils at the very entrance, others at the gates of Dis. Bocca's companion suspects the presence of one near the bottom of Hell, and the soul of Guido da Montefeltro was carried by a devil all the way from Minos, who judges all the damned, to the eighth bolgia of the eighth circle, or next to the last. The frescos of Pisa show how these diabolical body-snatchers

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXI and XXII *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XII, 73-75.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXVIII, 37-42. Cf. *Tundal's Vision, Scelta di Curiosità Lett.*, vol. 128, p. 43.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* XXXII, 106-108.



carried off their burdens. Dante saw one laden with a sinner come running to a pool of heaving pitch.

I saw it heave, and then, comprest, subside ;  
And while I gazed intently as I could  
Down in the den, 'Beware !' my leader cried,  
And drew me toward himself from where I stood.  
I turned, like one who lingers to behold  
Something that, seen, might well persuade his flight,  
Yet, as his blood with sudden fear grows cold,  
Checks not his speed to satisfy his sight ;  
And saw a fiend not far behind our back,  
Rushing up toward us o'er the rocky road.  
How fell his aspect was ! how fierce and black !  
And oh, what cruelty his gesture showed !  
Swiftly, with outspread wings, he skimmed his way ;  
Across his high and peaked shoulder cast,  
A sinner's carcass on both haunches lay,  
The fiend the ankle sinews griping fast.  
'Ye of our bridge,' he cried, 'curst-claws ! I bear  
One of Saint Zita's elders in my clutch ;  
Plunge him down deep and back I will repair  
To fetch you more. His land breeds plenty such :  
There, save Bonturo, every man's a cheat ;  
There *yes* of *no* for money they can make.'  
Hurling him down, back o'er the hard rock, fleet  
He sped like a mastiff set some thief to take.  
The sinner plunged, then, doubled up, arose  
While underneath the bridge more demons cried :  
'No sacred visage Malebolge knows !  
Far different swimming this from Serchio's tide !  
Unless by our fell forks thou wouldst be maimed,  
Look lest thou get above the pitch by chance.'  
More than a hundred prongs at him they aimed,  
Crying, 'Here under cover thou must dance !  
So, if thou'rt able, do thy filching hid !'



And struck him down as cunningly as cooks,  
 Lest the meat rise above the cauldron, bid  
 Their scullions keep it under with their hooks.<sup>1</sup>

— PARSONS.

This black devil with the sharp shoulders and wings was a pet type of medieval artists,<sup>2</sup> but is none the less extraordinary, for he seems to know all about the Ancients of Santa Zita; yet how did he get his information? In verse 8 of canto V the damned are described as confessing their sins, and in verses 55–57 of canto XXIII we learn that the band of devils to which our black cherub belongs could not leave their ‘fifth ditch.’ Whence, then, did this devil fetch his victims? Are we to suppose that he possessed miraculous knowledge, that he had learnt the sinner’s offence and the wickedness of Lucca through a chain of demons reaching up to Minos; or that Dante has made a slip? There are slips not a few in the *Divina Commedia*.

The band to which this devil belongs numbers ten, and, quite as old acquaintances of ours are called Old Nick, Old Scratch, and otherwise, so these have significant nicknames—Badtail, who is the chief, then Dog-face, Harlequin, Swinetusks, Frost-treader, and so forth,<sup>3</sup>—but the names of the others baffle translation. With this troop advanced Dante and Virgil.

I have, ere now, seen cavalry shift camp,  
 Begin the assault and muster in array;  
 And sometimes in retreat with rapid tramp;

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXI, 19–57.

<sup>2</sup> CÆSARIUS HEISTERBACENSIS, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, Distinctio V, cap. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXI, *passim*.

Light horsemen o'er your fields have I seen play,  
 Ye Aretines ! and squadrons as they passed,  
 The clash of tournaments and tilting knights,  
 Sometimes with drums and oft with trumpet blast,  
 And bells and signals given from castle heights,  
 With foreign instruments and with our own ;  
 But horse or foot I never saw before  
 Moving to music of so strange a tone,  
 Nor ship by any sign of star or shore.  
 With those ten fiends we went. Ah, troop of sin !  
 Fearful companionship ! but ever so  
 With saints at church, with gourmands at an inn !<sup>1</sup>

— PARSONS.

No wonder Dante thought himself in bad company ! One of the devils, at least, has a tail, another has tusks like a wild boar, and probably all have wings. One has a snout, and one, Rubicante, is mad. They show their teeth and are eager to get not only their hooks but their claws into a sinner. With raised eyebrows they threaten griefs to God's wards, — so Dante fears, — but Virgil cheers him.

'Fear not,' he answered, 'let them snarl at will ;  
 'Tis for their seething victims only meant.'  
 By the left bank the fiendish cohort veered ;  
 But each his tongue first pressed his teeth between  
 And with this signal at their leader leered,  
 Who blew a bugle note of sound obscene.<sup>2</sup>

— PARSONS.

Dante feared these devils ; yet High Providence had decreed that they should never leave their pit.<sup>3</sup> Hence

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXII, 1-15.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XXI, 133-139.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXIII, 55-57.

they could not follow him with their hooks. Had such limitation existed for all devils, how could they have got into human bodies or raised storms? According to the Gospel of St. Mark<sup>1</sup> Jesus wrought miraculous cures. 'At even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils . . . and he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak because they knew him.' At another time the Saviour rebuked an unclean spirit, saying, 'Hold thy peace and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.'<sup>2</sup> The story of the Gergesene swine and Huxley's essay are so well known that one need scarcely cite them. That this belief in demoniacal possession flourished until it was at last overcome by science, during the Renaissance, has been demonstrated by Mr. Andrew D. White in his *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology*.<sup>3</sup> But had Dante this superstition? One of his sinners, being bitten by a serpent, falls 'like a man bound by an oppilation or dragged down by a demon.'<sup>4</sup> Had Dante not believed in demoniacal possession, he would have been a heretic in the opinion of perhaps all his lay contemporaries, to say nothing of the Church.

Not content with entering men's bodies, devils disturb the very elements and raise great storms. Buonconte da Montefeltro told Dante in Purgatory how after his death at Campaldino a good and an evil spirit strove

<sup>1</sup> i, 32, 34.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 23-26.

<sup>3</sup> II, 97-167.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* XXIV, 112-114.

for his soul; how God's angel won and the evil spirit cried:—

‘O thou from heaven, why dost thou rob me?  
 Thou bearest away the eternal part of him,  
 For one poor little tear, that takes him from me;  
 But with the rest I'll deal in other fashion!  
 Well knowest thou how in the air is gathered  
 That humid vapour which to water turns,  
 Soon as it rises where the cold doth grasp it.  
 He joined that evil will, which aye seeks evil,  
 To intellect, and moved the mist and wind  
 By means of power, which his own nature gave;  
 Thereafter, when the day was spent, the valley  
 From Pratomagno to the great yoke covered  
 With fog, and made the heaven above intent,  
 So that the pregnant air to water changed;  
 Down fell the rain, and to the gullies came  
 Whate'er of earth it tolerated not;  
 And as it mingled with the mighty torrents  
 Towards the royal river with such speed  
 It headlong rushed, that nothing held it back.’<sup>1</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

This Buonconte da Montefeltro, whose soul was carried off by an angel, though his body was washed down to the sea through the agency of a devil,—this Buonconte had a father less fortunate. St. Francis came for his soul, but one of the black cherubim cried: ‘Take him not away; do me no wrong. He must come down among my minions because he gave the fraudulent counsel, for which I have ever since been at his hair; for he who repents not cannot be absolved, nor can repentance and a sinful will exist together because of the

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* V, 103–123. Cf. WHITE, *op. cit.* I, 336–350.



contradiction, which admits it not.' 'O sorrow,' cried Guido, 'how I shuddered when he took me, saying, "Thou didst not think, perchance, that I was a logician!"' <sup>1</sup>

Stranger still was the fate of one Frate Alberico and of Branca d' Oria, whom Dante discovered in the ice hell of traitors. To this friar Alberico Dante made there a promise which he broke in a way that will always cast a shadow on the poet's otherwise candid soul.

One of those sad souls in that cold crust  
Cried : ' O ye spirits of so cruel kind  
That to the lowest region ye are thrust !  
These frozen curtains from mine eyes unbind ;  
Let me a little vent this bursting heart  
Before again my gathering tears congeal.'  
I answered him, ' First tell me who thou art,  
If thou wouldst have me those glazed orbs unseal ;  
And, if I free thee not, may I be sunk  
Down to the bottom of this ice !' ' My name,'  
The wretch replied, ' is Alberic the monk ;  
I'm he whose fruit from no good gardens came ;  
Now for those figs of mine I get this date.'  
' What ! art thou dead, then ?' I exclaimed ; and he  
Answered me thus : ' I know not in what state  
My body in the upper world may be.  
This one advantage beareth over all  
The rest of Hell our Ptolemæan part,  
That oft the soul is hither doomed to fall  
Ere Atropos compel its final start.  
That thou more willingly mayst rub away  
These frozen drops that overglaze my face,  
Learn that no sooner doth a soul betray,  
As I did, than a demon takes its place

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXVII, 112-123.



Who rules the body till its term be run,  
 While to this cistern here the soul is hurled ;  
 Even now perchance the body of this one,  
 Who winters here behind me, walks the world !  
 If thou but newly art descended here,  
 His outward semblance haply thou mayst know :  
 That's Master Branca d' Oria ; many a year  
 Hath glided by since he was chained below.'  
 'Now I believe thou'rt mocking me,' said I ;  
 'For Branca d' Oria surely hath not gone  
 To his grave yet, but in the world on high  
 Eats, drinks, and sleeps, and putteth raiment on.'  
 'Ere to the foss of those curst-claws,' he said,  
 'Up where the pitch boils, Michel Zanche came ;  
 This caitiff left a devil in his stead,  
 Yea, in his own and in his kinsman's frame,  
 One who shared with him in his traitorous plot.  
 But put thy hand forth now and let me see :  
 Open mine eyelids !' And I ope'd them not ;  
 Rudeness was courtesy to such as he.<sup>1</sup>

— PARSONS.

It was not, as Scartazzini fancies, an ingenious invention of Dante's to imagine a devil in a corpse which he causes to appear alive. Cæsarius of Heisterbach had written a century earlier of a cleric whose body was enlivened by a devil instead of a soul.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, there is nothing truly new in Dante's conception of the devil and his works. Dante took what suited his purpose from literary traditions or from the folk-lore of his time. No human mind could imagine a new colour, though Nature

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXXIII, 109-150.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* XII, 4, 'De clerico cuius corpus diabolus loco animæ vegetabat.'

might reveal one. Nor could Dante or any other poet devise something wholly new. Dante let his fancy play on old designs, and his genius enabled him to give them a life which has not yet gone out.

Having endeavoured to show Dante's theories and superstitions as to devils, and his method of expression, we shall now consider certain other demons.

#### CHARON, THE RED-EYED FERRYMAN

Charon,<sup>1</sup> whom Dante took bodily from Virgil,<sup>2</sup> is the first of our poet's demons whom he names, and is still, as of old, the Ferryman, whose task is to carry the leaf-light souls across Acheron. Dante sees him coming through the gloom, an old man with hoary locks. He has fleecy cheeks and eyes that glow like blazing coals; for Charon is wrathful, and wrath may be said, by a stretch of imagination, to make a man's eyes flame. In darkness a man's eyes are invisible, but those of a dog or cat are lighted, as it were, by a 'diabolical glow.' This natural phenomenon may explain all the devils with red or flaming eyes that ever disturbed Christendom. A red-eyed fiend appeared to the virgin Agnes Blannbekin, who flourished under Rudolph of Hapsburg and Albert I of Austria;<sup>3</sup> and Tundal saw in his vision black imps whose eyes seemed lamps aglow.<sup>4</sup> Not only are Charon's eyes like hot coals, but are encircled by rings of flame. These are purely diabolic and Dante's own invention, devised, perhaps, as a substitute for the

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* III, 82-129.

<sup>2</sup> *Æn.* VI, 298-301.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. ROSKOFF, *Geschichte des Teufels*, I, 344.

<sup>4</sup> See *Scelta di Curios. Lett.*, vol. 128, pp. 68-69.

black rings that often encircle the eyes of persons given up to violent sorrow.

Dante's Charon, shade though he may be, is strong enough to beat the spirits with his oar and to row them over Acheron. Loyal to infernal precedents, he bids Virgil and Dante angrily to go another way, but Virgil answers, 'Charon, be not wrathful; thus it is willed there where will is power and ask no more.' Then the Ferryman's fleecy cheeks were still.

Is Charon naked or not? Virgil clad him like a dirty Roman. Dante mentions no cloak, and, as most of his lost souls except the hypocrites are naked, it may be consistent thus to imagine Charon.

No necessity of allegory forced our poet to alter essentially the looks of this demon, but Charon has undergone a slight change of soul, for he seems to know that he is no longer a servant of the antique Gods. In thirteen hundred years the world above him has made some changes in its divinities and demons, and Charon, son of Erebus, feels that he must obey the new régime.

#### MINOS AND HIS TAIL

Having been ferried across Acheron, the lost souls arrive in some mysterious manner or are fetched by the black cherubim into the presence of Minos,<sup>1</sup>—one of the most ingeniously devised and probably the queerest of Dante's infernal functionaries. After thirteen hundred years Minos has grown a tail—the chief justice of the nether world has a tail!—and no ordinary append-

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXVII, 112-124.

age, but so long that he can wind it round his body nine times. And Minos snarls. The imagination struggles to see him as he stands at the entrance to the dark kingdom.

There standeth Minos horribly, and snarls ;  
Examines the transgressions at the entrance ;  
Judges and sends according as he girds him.  
I say, that when the spirit evil-born  
Cometh before him, wholly it confesses ;  
And this discriminator of transgressions  
Seeth what place in hell is meet for it ;  
Girds himself with his tail as many times  
As grades he wishes it should be thrust down.  
Always before him many of them stand ;  
They go by turns each one unto the judgment ;  
They speak, and hear, and then are downward hurled.  
'O thou, that to this dolorous hostelry  
Comest,' said Minos to me when he saw me,  
Leaving the practice of so great an office,  
'Look how thou enterest and in whom thou trustest ;  
Let not the portal's amplitude deceive thee.'  
And unto him my Guide, 'Why criest thou, too?  
Do not impede his journey fate-ordained ;  
It is so willed there where is power to do  
That which is willed ; and ask no further question.'<sup>1</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

Extraordinary fantasy ! This demon Minos can speak, but rather than do so to the sinners, he decides upon the enormity of their crimes by the twists of his tail, which must be kept going day and night at a terrific speed to dispose of such a multitude. Dante's Minos has kept some of the dignity anciently ascribed to the

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* V, 4-24.

lawgiver and king of Crete and to his brother Rhadamanthos,<sup>1</sup> but the demigod has turned into a demon,<sup>2</sup> and got a tail to be used for expressing divine opinion as to the heinousness of the sin. Each sinner on arriving before Minos seems to lose all guile, and make, as if hypnotised, a confession of all his sins. So Minos is not a mind reader, but knows Dante's system of ethics, and is thus not only an Aristotelian scholastic with a keen sense as to the magnitude of the sinner's wickedness and as to his predominating sin, but has a tail, like countless devils of medieval art and tradition. Minos, like Charon, gives way to his diabolical temperament in bursts of fury. So impatient was he with the fraudulent counsellor, Guido da Montefeltro, that, having entwined his stubborn back eight times, for sheer rage he bit his tail, then said, 'This one belongs to the thievish fire.'<sup>3</sup> These words seem to warrant the supposition that the thoughts of Minos were sometimes too subtle to be expressed by his tail.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. EDW. MOORE, *Studies in Dante*, First Series, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> I Corinthians i, 20 'But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils.'

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXVII, 124-127.





From an ancient vase

## HOW CERBERO DIFFERS FROM CERBERUS

The demon Cerbero set by Dante to guard the gluttonous is medievalised into a revolting monster whose features seem to have developed out of a refashioning allegory. Dante's words suggest some loathsome creature, a hybrid of dog and man.<sup>1</sup>

*Io sono al terzo cerchio della piovra  
Eterna, maledetta, fredda e greve:  
Regola e qualità mai non l'è nuova.  
Grandine grossa, e acqua tinta, e neve  
Per l' aer tenebroso si riversa:*

<sup>1</sup> Ferrucci, in *Giorn. Arcadico*, 1824, tries to show that Dante's Cerbero is as little as possible like a dog. With Ferrucci's opinion I thoroughly agree.

*Pute la terra che questo riceve.  
 Cerbero, fiera crudele e diversa,  
 Con tre gole caninamente latra  
 Sopra la gente che quivi è sommersa.  
 Gli occhi ha vermigli, la barba unta ed atra,  
 E il ventre largo, e unghiate le mani;  
 Graffia gli spiriti, ingoia,<sup>1</sup> ed isquatra.  
 Urlar gli fa la pioggia come cani:  
 Dell' un de' lati fanno all' altro schermo;  
 Volgonsi spesso i miseri profani.  
 Quando ci scorse Cerbero, il gran vermo,  
 Le bocche aperse, e mostrocci le sanne:  
 Non avea membro che tenesse fermo.<sup>2</sup>  
 E il Duca mio distese le sue spanne;  
 Prese la terra, e con piene le pugna  
 La gittò dentro alle bramose canne.  
 Qual è quel cane che abbaiano agugna,  
 E si racqueta poi che il pasto morde,  
 Che solo a divorarlo intende e pugna;  
 Cotai si fecer quelle facce lorde  
 Dello demonio Cerbero che introna  
 L' anime sì, ch' esser vorrebber sorde.<sup>3</sup>*

In the third circle am I of the rain  
 Eternal, maledict, and cold and heavy;  
 Its law and quality are never new.  
 Huge hail and water sombre-hued, and snow,  
 Athwart the tenebrous air pour down amain;  
 Noisome the earth is, that receiveth this.

<sup>1</sup> Some MSS. read 'iscuioa' (cf. Longfellow's trans.). 'Ingoia' is also acceptable, for Cerbero is a monster and acts monstrously. Cf. the actions of the 'worm' in the vision of Alberic cited on p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. p. 340, note 2; also this verse from Arnaut Daniel (cited by KUHNS, *The Treatment of Nature in Dante*, p. 35), 'non ai membre nom fremisca ni onglà.'

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* VI, 7-33.

Cerberus, monster cruel and uncouth,  
 With his three gullets like a dog is barking  
 Over the people that are there submerged.  
 Red eyes he has and unctuous beard and black,  
 And belly large, and armed with claws his hands ;  
 He rends the spirits, flays, and quarters them.  
 Howl the rain maketh them like unto dogs ;  
 One side they make a shelter for the other ;  
 Oft turn themselves the wretched reprobates.  
 When Cerberus perceived us, the great worm !  
 His mouth he opened and displayed his tusks,  
 Not a limb had he that was motionless.  
 And my conductor with his spans extended  
 Took of the earth and with his fists well filled,  
 He threw it into those rapacious gullets.  
 Such as that dog is, who by barking craves,  
 And quiet grows soon as his food he gnaws,  
 For to devour it he but thinks and struggles,  
 The like became those muzzles filth-begrimed  
 Of Cerberus, the demon who so thunders  
 Over the souls that they would fain be deaf.

— LONGFELLOW.

It remained for a heavenly messenger at the gates  
 of Dis to tell the resisting demons how Cerberus still  
 has a peeled chin and throat for having tried to thwart  
 the fates.<sup>1</sup>

*Che giova nelle fata dar di cozzo ?  
 Cerbero vostro, se ben vi ricorda,  
 Ne porta ancor pelato il mento e il gozzo.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Æn.* VI, 395-396. On a capital of the baptismal church at Monte Santangelo may be seen (if I mistake not) Cerberus being dragged with a chain round his neck and resisting with wide-open mouth, but vainly.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* IX, 97-99.

Scarlet eyes, a black and greasy beard, a broad belly, hooked hands<sup>1</sup> and quivering limbs, — such perhaps are the attributes of a glutton exaggerated into a demon; but where shall we find these features in the classics or in any antique work?<sup>2</sup> In his *Genealogy of the Gods* Boccaccio says that Cerberus had a beard. Whence he derived this information would be hard to say.

Dante's Cerbero is a medieval demon; of the ancient Cerberus<sup>3</sup> nothing is left but the three jaws, the gluttony, the barking, the name, and a ferocious desire to foil a righteous will. This obstinacy was shown by Charon, Minos, and by most of the demons, no longer forced by policy to be compliant or courteous, as they often were when bent on some mischief in the upper world. The surroundings in which Dante found Cerbero are like those in which Friar Alberico came upon a like demon in his voyage through Hell.

'After all these things I was led to the Tartarean Regions, and to the mouth of the Infernal Pit, which seemed like unto a well, regions full of horrid darkness, of fetid exhalations, of loud shrieks and loud howlings. Near this Hell was a worm of immeasurable size, bound with a large chain, one end of which seemed to be fastened in Hell. Before the mouth of this Hell there stood a great multitude of souls which he absorbed at once, as if they were flies; so that, drawing in his

<sup>1</sup> Cf. citation from *Æneid* given in chapter on 'Harpies,' p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> The figure reproduced above is from vol. VIII, pl. ix, of *Mon. Ined. publicati dall' Istituto di Corrisp. Archeol.*, and differs in no essential respect from another plate (tav. xxxix) in vol. II.

<sup>3</sup> Probably Virgil's. Cf. *Æn.* VI, 417-423.

breath, he swallowed them all together ; then, breathing, exhaled them all on fire, like sparks.’<sup>1</sup>

#### PLUTO, THE DEMON OF WEALTH

After their encounter with Cerbero the two poets came upon Pluto, the great foe, keeping watch over the fourth circle, in which were punished niggards and squanderers.

“*Pape Satan, pape Satan aleppe,*” began Pluto, with his clucking voice. And that gentle sage, who knew everything, said to comfort me, “Let not thy fear hurt thee ; for whatso power he have shall not take from thee the descent of this rock.” Then he turned to that swollen lip and said, “Be silent, accursed wolf ! inwardly consume thyself with thine own rage ; not without cause is this going to the abyss ; it is willed on high, there where Michael did vengeance on the proud adultery.” As sails swollen by the wind fall in a heap when the mast snaps, so fell to earth the cruel beast.’<sup>2</sup>

Again an ancient deity, Pluto or Plutus,<sup>3</sup> reappears after thirteen centuries as a devil whose shape is monstrous, but as impossible to define as is the meaning of his uncouth language. Could Pluto have meant to blaspheme ? *Pape* is the regular Italian equivalent of *papæ*,<sup>4</sup> a word used in Boethius<sup>5</sup> to express astonishment.

<sup>1</sup> Longfellow’s translation of the *Vision of Friar Alberic*.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* VII, 1-15, Norton’s translation. My opinion as to Pluto’s jargon was not formed until I had read both the older writers and the modern critics.

<sup>3</sup> See PAGET TOYNBEE, *Dante Dictionary*, s.v. ‘Pluto.’

<sup>4</sup> ‘Papæ’ in MSS. would often be written ‘pape.’

<sup>5</sup> *De Cons. Ph.* IV, *Prosa* ii, *ad init.*, ‘Tum ego, papæ inquam, ut magna promittis !’ See other citations in Forcellini.



*Satan* may be an invocation of the Evil One, or merely a profane cry; but *aleppe*—what can *aleppe* mean? St. Ambrose says that the first letter, Aleph, means doctrine.<sup>1</sup> Another patristic writer devotes a chapter to show that Aleph means Christ, for Christ is the first of all.<sup>2</sup> Could Pluto have meant to cry, 'Ho, Satan! Ho, Satan! Christ!' Such blasphemy would be natural in a demon. Nor should any one wonder that Pluto has been able to pick up a little Hebrew in the course of so long a life. Indeed, all the infernal functionaries, no matter what their own tongue may have been, could hardly fail to gather many oaths from the cosmopolitan throng of sinners.

Pluto uses gibberish, but why has he a harsh or clucking voice? A certain Richalmus, who flourished about 1270, being bothered in the performance of his priestly functions by various devils, cried out, 'Behold how during my discourse the devils pester me with coughing; thus the demons do their talking.'<sup>3</sup> Cæsar of Heisterbach records that the devil, on being asked why his voice was so rough, replied, 'Because I am always burning.'<sup>4</sup>

#### PHLEGYAS, THE FERRYMAN OF DIS

For setting fire to the Delphian temple of Apollo, Phlegyas was slain by that god and doomed to everlasting punishment in the lower world. Dante makes of

<sup>1</sup> *Expos. in Ps. cxviii*, MIGNE, *Patrologia*, vol. 15, col. 1263.

<sup>2</sup> MIGNE, *Patrologia*. Perhaps Lactantius or Jerome. See *Parad.* XXVI, 17. <sup>3</sup> Cf. ROSKOFF, *Geschichte des Teufels*, I, p. 337.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* I, p. 319.

him a wrathful demon, and, stranger still, a ferryman, who against his will carries Dante and Virgil across the Stygian marsh to the city of Dis, of which Phlegyas is the guardian.<sup>1</sup> Since the souls of those who came before Minos are sentenced and then hurled below or carried down by devils, Phlegyas can only seldom have had any ferrying to do;<sup>2</sup> yet there was a system of signals so devised as to inform this demon of the arrival of passengers, and we may imagine these signals in charge of various devils.

Of Phlegyas's looks Dante has not a word to say. Like most of his kind, Phlegyas is hot-tempered, and gives way to his wrath on discovering that he has failed to gather in another lost soul. Phlegyas is a shade, yet seems fairly to fly in his little craft, which is very old. Scarcely has he landed his visitors when they are hindered by a band of more than a thousand nameless demons.<sup>3</sup>

#### THE FURIES

Having passed the band of more than a thousand devils, Virgil and Dante are again hindered by three Furies, who suddenly rise on the glowing top of a tower in the city of Dis.<sup>4</sup> These Furies are stained with blood, have feminine limbs and demeanour, have small horned serpents for hair, and are girt with greenest hydras. Virgil, who knows well these minions of the queen of

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* VIII, *passim*. On Phlegyas, see TOYNBEE, *Dante Dictionary*, s.v. 'Flegias.'

<sup>2</sup> See H. F. Tozer's comment on *Inf.* VIII, 19.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 32-34.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* IX, 35-38.

everlasting sorrow, cries to Dante: 'Look at the fierce Erinyes! This is Megæra on the left; she that weeps on the right Alecto. Tisiphone is in the middle.' Thereupon Virgil was silent. With their nails all were tearing their breasts, beating their palms, and crying so loud that Dante shrank toward Virgil for dread. 'Come, Medusa, and we'll turn him to stone,' they all said, looking down. 'In an evil hour we did not make Theseus atone for his assault.' 'Turn away,' spoke Virgil, 'and keep shut thine eyes; for, if the Gorgon appeared and thou didst see, there would be no hope for thy return.' With these words Virgil drew Dante close to him.

O ye who have sound understanding  
Think well upon the doctrine hidden  
Beneath the veil of mystic rimes!<sup>1</sup>

Thus Dante calls our attention to the meaning of these fiends whose ethical purpose is to hinder the soul's progress toward repentance. These Furies are past sins whose mere appearance is to make man despair of God's mercy. The Gorgon typifies despair. Such is Butler's interpretation. Alexander Neckam takes Alecto, Tisiphone, and Megæra to symbolise respectively evil thoughts, evil speech, evil deeds.<sup>2</sup>

From Virgil Dante got the idea of putting these Furies on the tower of Dis;<sup>3</sup> their bodily characteristics are almost all from Statius,<sup>4</sup> but their behaviour is an

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* IX, 37-63.

<sup>2</sup> Wright's ed., p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> *Æn.* VI, 554-555.

<sup>4</sup> *Thebaid*, I, 103 ff. Cf. MOORE, *Studies in Dante*, First Series, p. 245.

invention of Dante. Like Filippo Argenti and Minos, they tear themselves, being overcome by wrath. Of Dante's many demons only one is mild, and that is Geryon, 'the foul image of fraud.'

## THE MINOTAUR

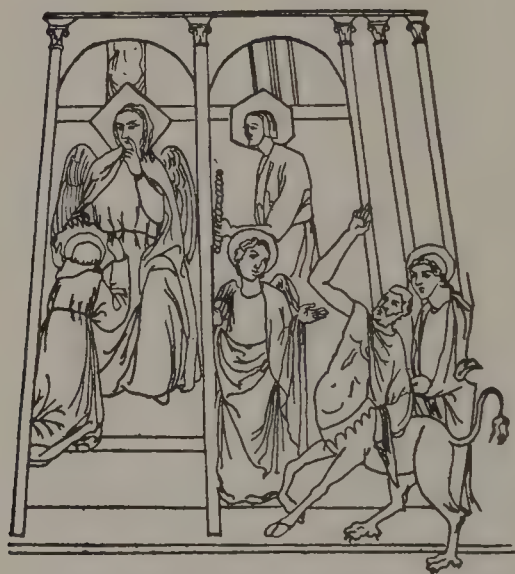
To watch over the seventh circle Dante has set the Minotaur, and we are now far down in Hell where the Violent are plunged in Phlegethon, a river of boiling blood. The monster, whom Dante seems to have left in the ancient medley of man and bull,<sup>1</sup> lies in a rocky place at full length. Hard by are scurrying Centaurs. On seeing Virgil and Dante, the 'infamy of Crete' bit himself like one whom anger racks within. Then Virgil shouted: 'Maybe thou believest that here is Athens's duke who put thee to death up in the world? Go, beast, for this one comes not by thy sister's teaching but goes to see your torments.' At this taunt the Minotaur went staggering like a bull that has got the death blow, and Virgil cried warily: 'Run to the pass! While he is maddened it behooves thee to go down.'<sup>2</sup>

One may well believe that this monster, whom Dante and Virgil could pass with impunity only while he was

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Virgil's idea, *Æn.* VI, 23-26. In a mosaic pavement of San Michele Maggiore in Pavia one may see Theseus slaying the Minotaur with a club. The Minotaur is designed with a bull's body and a man's head. These figures are surrounded by this inscription, TESEUS · INTRAVIT · MONSTRUMQ · BIFORME · NECAVIT. Dante probably got his main idea from Ovid, *Met.* VIII, 156-161, 166 ff. Whether Dante thought the Minotaur had a man's head or a bull's would be hard to say.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XII, 11-27.

furious, offered a more sinister hindrance to the souls of the Violent on their way to bloody Phlegethon. Yet the Minotaur may have been lying there as a watcher, or merely as a gloomy symbol of that 'bestiality' which Dante betokens by all these combinations of man and beast.



GIOTTO'S CENTAUR AND ST. FRANCIS, AT ASSISI

After C. Fea

#### THE CENTAURS

*Centaurus est une autre beste,  
Poitrine, espauls, mains, teste  
Ha tot ensi come ont home.  
Asne resamble, c' est la some  
Aval par desoz la centu(i)re  
Moult est de mauvaie nature.<sup>1</sup>*

A manuscript of the eleventh century in the library of Boulogne-sur-Mer is embellished with an illumination,

<sup>1</sup> *Le Bestiaire de GERVAISE, Romania*, I, p. 430.



perhaps two centuries older, which represents the signs of the Constellations and of the Zodiac. The Archer here is a Centaur in a beaver cap. He may or may not have wings, for the drawing is obscure.<sup>1</sup> Two Centaurs, winged, with swords and shields, and fighting listlessly, are sculptured on the cathedral of Freiburg-im-Breisgau.<sup>2</sup> A German checkerboard (1260-1300 A.D.) shows amid other monstrous figures a curiously pudgy Centaur who has just let fly an arrow.<sup>3</sup> But the most famous of all medieval conceptions of the Centaurs is at Assisi.<sup>4</sup>

There Giotto, Dante's contemporary and perhaps his friend, has best wrought the conception of the Middle Ages. St. Francis on his knees before the Virgin is taking the vow, and to one side is a horror-stricken Centaur. With his lifted hand he seems to protest at the saint's surrender.

From the tenth to the sixteenth century Centaurs often occur, especially on church doors. On the bronze portal of Augsburg one is shooting at a lion, another at a man. Similar scenes are carved on the churches of Brenz and of Arles; for Centaurs, from antiquity down through the Middle Ages, were used to symbolise the overruling animal passions. St. Jerome records that when St. Anthony, in the nineteenth year of his age,

<sup>1</sup> *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, vol. 87, pp. 107-108.

<sup>2</sup> CAHIER, *Mélanges*, vol. I, pl. xxiv.

<sup>3</sup> VON HEFNER-ALTENECK, *Trachten, Kunstwerke und Geräthschaften, vom frühen Mittelalter bis Ende des Achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 2d ed., II, plates cxxxvii and cxxxviii.

<sup>4</sup> CARLO FEA, *Descriz. ragionata della . . . basilica papale di S. Francesco d' Assisi*, pl. vii.

went to visit St. Paul the Hermit, in the desert, he met a creature half man and half horse. The saint made the sign of the cross as a protection against diabolical influences, and then inquired the way to Paul's hermitage. Thereupon the strange hybrid uttered some harsh, semi-articulate whinnying sound, and, pointing with his right hand in the proper direction, galloped off. This apparition, according to St. Jerome, was an emissary of Satan sent to frighten and deter St. Anthony.<sup>1</sup>

Dante not only makes of the Centaurs demons, but punishes them (how, it would be hard to say) by setting them on guard over the Violent in the seventh circle of Hell.

A moat I saw, with Virgil's words agreeing,  
Of ample width and bending like a bow :  
While thus it seemed to compass all the plain,  
Between it and the precipice's base  
Ran Centaurs armed with arrows, in a train,  
As in the world they once pursued the chase.  
They stopped at seeing us advance ; and three  
Rushed with their bows (their arrows choosing first),  
And one cried afar off : ' What seek ye ?  
What destined round adown the cliff accursed ?  
Speak where you stand, or else I pull the cord.'  
' Not unto thee, to Chiron there alone,  
Will we give answer,' thus replied my Lord :  
' Thy will to rashness evermore was prone.'  
Then touching me, he said : ' 'Tis Nessus ; look !  
Who for the beauteous Dejanira dying,  
Himself full vengeance for his murder took.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. P. EVANS, *Animal Symbolism in Ecclesiastical Architecture*, pp. 317-318. Cf. also GREGORY, *Moral. in Job.* lib, VII, 28, and I Cor. ii, 14 (Vulgate).

Behold the middle one his bosom eyeing ;  
 That is great Chiron, who Achilles bred ;  
 And yon is Pholus, erst so full of ire.  
 By thousands thus about the streamlet's bed,  
 They gallop, shooting each that riseth higher  
 Than his offence permits him to ascend.'  
 As nearer to those agile beasts we drew,  
 Grim Chiron, with an arrow's feathered end,  
 Behind his jaws his long beard backward threw,  
 And thus his giant mouth the monster showed.  
 'Do ye perceive,' he to his comrades said,  
 'The one behind in walking shakes the road ?  
 Not so are wont the footsteps of the dead.'<sup>1</sup>

— PARSONS.

When Virgil had explained to Chiron the cause and aim of their journey, asking guidance and a Centaur to bear Dante, Chiron turned to Nessus, and, mounted on him, our Florentine rode along the crimson pool. On the façade of the cathedral at Chartres in France may be seen another rider mounted on a Centaur, but there is some difference between what that sculpture means and the privilege vouchsafed to Dante.

These Centaurs vary little from the antique. Cacus, however, whom Dante, misinterpreting Virgil,<sup>2</sup> made also into a Centaur, is a monster. Dante met him in another region of Hell ; for Cacus was in life not only violent, but violent with fraud. The poet saw him in pursuit of a sinner. On his back swarmed snakes up to the nape, and there lay a fiery dragon.<sup>3</sup> So the Furies

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XII, 52-82. See TOYNBEE, *Dante Dictionary*, s.v. 'Centauri.'

<sup>2</sup> *Æn.* VIII, 193-199, especially 194. See TOYNBEE, *Dante Dictionary*, s.v. 'Caco.'

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXV, 17-33.

had snakes for tresses, and snakes writhe on the Cerberus of Virgil, but no such Centaur as this snake — and dragon-ridden Caco has come down from ancient times. A bronze Centaur in the Louvre bears neither serpents nor a dragon, but a Cupid, whose graceful pose and air of happiness seem due to a friendship between him and the Centaur.

#### THE HARPIES

After their encounter with 'the infamy of Crete' and the Centaurs, Virgil and Dante came to a pathless wood, — not such a wood as those known to living men, but one where the fronds are dusky and the branches knotty and twisted. No fruits are there, but poisonous thorns. This is the abode of the Suicides, whose souls are in the weird plants, and here dwell the Harpies, — brooding thoughts embodied in ghastly, birdlike shapes that forever haunt and torture those who have done violence to themselves.

There do the hideous Harpies make their nests,  
 Who chased the Trojans from the Strophades,  
 With sad announcement of impending doom ;  
 Broad wings have they, and necks and faces human,  
 And feet with claws, and their great bellies fledged,  
 They make lament upon the wondrous trees.<sup>1</sup>

—LONGFELLOW.

Now, when the soul of some suicide reaches this forest, it goes to no established place, but whither fortune wills, and there grows up in a plant. The Harpies, then, feeding on the leaves, create pain and for the pain an outlet.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XIII, 10-15.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XIII, 94-102.

In the Harpies Dante has made several important alterations. Not only has he removed them from the Strophades to Hell, but he has modified their looks and actions. Virgil gives them virginly faces, wings, befouling bellies, mouths pallid with hunger, hooked hands.<sup>1</sup> In Dante's Hell they appear with broad wings and feet with claws. In giving them hooked hands (*uncaequae manus*<sup>2</sup>), Virgil was perhaps following the traditionary sculptural form which shows the Harpies with both feet and hands.<sup>3</sup> Dante's description agrees perfectly with a Harpy carved on the capital of the first column to the right of the portal on the church called San Clemente at Cesauria. This sculpture antedates 1200 A.D., and may be as old as the ninth century.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Inf.* XIII, 14, with *Inf.* VI, 17. See chapter on 'Cerberus,' pp. 47-49.

<sup>2</sup> *Æn.* III, 209-217:—

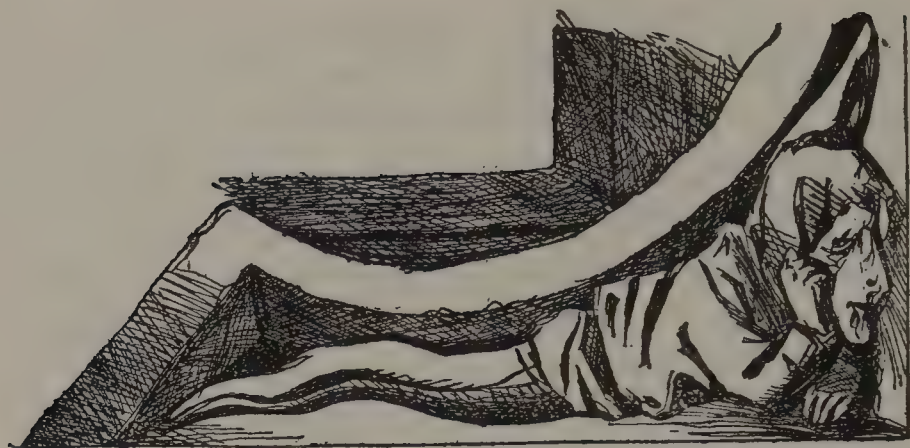
'Servatum ex undis Strophadum me litore primum  
Accipiunt; Strophades Graio stant nomine dictae,  
Insulae Ionio in magno, quas dira Celaeno  
Harpyiaequae colunt aliae. . . .  
Tristius haud illis monstrum, nec saevior ulla  
Pestis et ira deum Stygiis sese extulit undis.  
Virginei volucrum vultus foedissima ventris  
Prohuvies, uncaeque manus, et pallida semper  
Ora fame.'

Cf. also *Æn.* III, 225 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See two designs on pp. 264 and 265, vol. I, of *Histoire de la sculpture grecque*, by M. COLLIGNON.

<sup>4</sup> See H. W. SCHULTZ, *Denkmäler der Kunst des Mittelalters in Unteritalien*, Atlas, pl. lv.





A FIGURE ON ST. MARK'S AT VENICE

After Ruskin

## GERYON

The two poets move forward to the left until they come to the brink of an abyss. How shall they get farther down? Virgil, well versed in magic and in the trickery to be used with demons, taking from Dante a certain cord, casts it into the void. Hardly has the charm fallen when there rises, swimming, a wondrous figure, the demon Geryon.<sup>1</sup>

“Behold the wild beast with the pointed tail, that passes mountains, and breaks walls and weapons; behold him that infects all the world.” Thus began my Leader to speak to me; and he beckoned to him that he should come to shore near the end of the trodden marbles. And that loathsome image of fraud came onward, and landed his head and his body, but drew not his tail upon the bank. His face was that of a just man (so benignant was its skin outwardly), and of a serpent all the trunk beside; he had two paws, hairy to the armpits;

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XVI, 106-136.

his back and breast and both his sides were painted with nooses and circles. With more colours of woof and warp Tartars or Turks never made cloth, nor were such webs woven by Arachne.

‘As sometimes boats lie on the shore, so that they are partly in water and partly on the ground, and as yonder, among the gluttonous Germans, the beaver settles himself to make his war, so lay that worst of beasts upon the rim that closes in the sand with stone. In the void all his tail was quivering, twisting upwards its venomous fork, which like a scorpion’s armed the point.



A DRAGON

From a medieval manuscript. After Cahier

‘The Leader said, “Now must needs our way bend a little toward that wicked beast that is couching there.”’<sup>1</sup> — NORTON.

Virgil leaves Dante a moment in order to get Geryon to lend them his strong shoulders; meanwhile Dante speaks with the usurers; but, fearing to delay overlong, turns and finds Virgil mounted on the back of the ‘wild animal’ Geryon. At a word from Virgil to be sturdy and bold and to mount in front, — for Virgil wishes himself to ward off the baneful tail, — Dante obediently seats himself on the great shoulders, shivering as if in a quartan fever. Then Virgil gives the word: ‘Geryon, bestir thee now. Wide be the rings and the descent be slow. Mind that thou bearest strange freight.’

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XVII, 1-30.

At this command Geryon backs slowly out; then, feeling himself quite free, turned his tail where his breast had been, and, waving it like an eel, he gathered the air in with his two clawing limbs. Slowly in circles Geryon swam down into the thundering abyss and there set his riders sullenly; then was off like an arrow from the bow.<sup>1</sup>

Such is the demon Geryon. Of the three-bodied king of Spain<sup>2</sup> who by some writers is said to have kept open house to strangers in order to rob and kill them,<sup>3</sup> nothing remains but the name. Yet Dante's Geryon is not wholly an original figure, but rather a blending of such physical traits as best suited the allegory of fraud. Nor is Geryon wholly a compilation, for in an irregular nook on San Marco at Venice lies a demon with a serpent's body and a human face slightly bestialised.<sup>4</sup> Geryon is, also, not unlike the 'mantichora' described by Solinus as having a human face, a lionlike body, a tail like a scorpion's pointed with a sting. So nimble is this mantichora, so great a leaper, that not even the widest spaces can delay it nor the broadest obstacles.<sup>5</sup> In the Bible, too, are words which may have influenced Dante, for in Genesis (iii, 1) we learn that the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field; and to St. John

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Inf.* XVII, 2 (*Che passa i monti, e rompe i muri e l'armi*), with what B. Latini says of the lynx, *Tresor*, p. 248, ' . . . est de si clere veue, que si oil percent les murs et les mons,' etc.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Æn.* VIII, 202, 'tergeminus Geryones.'

<sup>3</sup> Boccaccio and the Anonimo Fiorentino. See their commentaries.

<sup>4</sup> See RUSKIN'S *Seven Lamps*, new ed., Sunnyside, Orpington, Kent, 1880, pl. xiv.

<sup>5</sup> Lib. LII, cap. 37. Cited by Toynbee.

there appeared locusts 'whose faces were as the faces of men. . . . And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails, and their power was to hurt men five months.' <sup>1</sup> So much for the man's head, the serpent's body, and the scorpion's sting. But where did Dante get the knots or nooses and the little rings?

Lanci,<sup>2</sup> in 1858, called attention to a griffin at Pisa, covered with a horse-cloth (*gualdrappa*), presumably of stone, in which were cut knots and little rings. In this griffin's decoration Dante's contemporaries would have been likely to see evidences of Moslem magic and devils. That Dante was once in Pisa seems likely from the observation shown in his mention of Caprara and Gorgona. Nevertheless, there is far better ground for believing that Dante derived his main notion as to the construction of Geryon from Solinus and from the Bible, and that he probably found the little rings either in various illuminated pictures of the dragon,<sup>3</sup> — a creature often identical with Geryon from the neck to the tip of the tail — or that he found both knots and rings in those Tartar or Turkish cloths<sup>4</sup> from which he certainly derived Geryon's brilliant hues.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Oriental

<sup>1</sup> Rev. ix, 7, 10, 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Della forma di Geryon*, etc. *Lettera al chiarissimo professore Cavaliere Salvatori Betti*. Rome, 1858. This brief book has a frontispiece showing Dante and Virgil on Geryon.

<sup>3</sup> See chapter on 'Dragon,' p. 321 ff., and design, p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> See article on 'Tartar Cloths,' by P. TOYNBEE, in *Romania*, October, 1900, pp. 559-564. When Tristran had died they covered him with such cloths: *couvrent le d'un paile roe*. See BARTSCH AND HORNING, *Langue et Littérature Françaises*, col. 221, vs. 21.



carpets or rugs or 'cloths' were owned by many Europeans, who employed them in the gorgeous ceremonies of the Church and to adorn their houses or their persons. In their interwoven or embroidered knots and spangles, their little wheels or rings, their shimmering hues, Dante had both colours and patterns to apply to the skin of his demon Geryon.

Taken for all in all, Geryon is an extraordinary fantasy.<sup>1</sup> Backing away from the edge of the abyss, he seems a ship with a human figurehead; once under way, he is like a fish imitating grotesquely the downward soar of a falcon. Yet Geryon is swift as an arrow and speeds away like a flash when freed of his riders, whose mission he adequately understands. Whether or not Geryon ever had any other function than to lower visiting poets to the foot of a jagged rock near the trenches called Malebolge, is a puzzle which Dante leaves to an already strained imagination.

#### THE SIREN

Though the myth-makers of Asia seem to have attributed a fish's tail to the sirens (usually male), the truly classic shape of these monsters is half-woman, half-bird. The monuments of the Middle Ages, as well as the stories of the North, represent them with a fish's tail.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the literary classic tradition yields to the folklore brought into Europe by the tribes that came out of the East. Patristic theologians and exe-

<sup>1</sup> Chrysaon, a woman of black eyes and agreeable face, had the body of a dragon.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. CAHIER, *Mélanges*, II, 177.



getes confounded sirens and mermaids, believing them to be real creatures expressly intended to serve as deterrent types of carnal appetites and sensual enticements.<sup>1</sup> They allure sailors with their song, as of old, and, having put them to sleep, tear their flesh and kill them. 'Such are they,' says Hugo of St. Victor,<sup>2</sup> 'such are they who love the delights of this world, its pomps and theatrical pleasures. Made dissolute by tragedies and comedies, as if overcome by a heavy sleep, they become a prey to the devil.' It is the scepticism of credulity that transforms these creatures, half bird, half fish, or even half horse,<sup>3</sup> into three bawds.<sup>4</sup> They sing sweetly still, but have lost their borrowed beastlike elements; and monkish influence, working upon Dante, has converted one of the sirens into a loathsome, yet almost human demon.

*Nell' ora che non può il calor diurno  
Intepidar più il freddo della luna,  
Vinto da terra o talor da Saturno ;  
Quando i geomanti lor maggior fortuna  
Veggiono in oriente, innanzi all' alba,  
Surger per via che poco le sta bruna ;  
Mi venne in sogno una femmina balba,  
Negli occhi guercia e sopra i piè distorta,  
Con le man monche, e di colore scialba.*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. P. EVANS, *Animal Symbolism*, p. 316.

<sup>2</sup> *De Bestiis et aliis rebus*, lib. II, cap. 32.

<sup>3</sup> A Tusco-Venetian Bestiary gives the three combinations. GOLDSTAUB UND WENDRINER, *Ein Tosco-Venezianischer Bestiarius*, p. 27. Halle, 1892.

<sup>4</sup> ISIDOR OF SEVILLE, *Etymol.* XI, iii, 30-31, declares the sirens were really three harlots. In this he is followed by ST. AMBROSE, *Enarratio in Ps. xliii*; by BRUNETTO LATINI, *Tresor*, pp. 189-190; HUGO OF ST. VICTOR, *loc cit.*; and perhaps by others.

*Io la mirava ; e, come il sol conforta  
 Le fredde membra che la notte aggrava,  
 Così lo sguardo mio le facea scorta  
 La lingua, e poscia tutta la drizzava  
 In poco d' ora, e lo smarrito volto,  
 Come amor vuol, così lo colorava.  
 Poi ch' ell' avea il parlar così disciolto,  
 Cominciava a cantar sì, che con pena  
 Da lei avrei mio intento rivolto.  
 Io son, cantava, io son dolce Sirena,<sup>1</sup>  
 Che i marinari in mezzo mar dismago ;  
 Tanto son di piacere a sentir piena.  
 Io volsi Ulisse del suo cammin vago  
 Al canto mio ; e qual meco si ausa  
 Rado sen parte, sì tutto l' appago.  
 Ancor non era sua bocca richiusa,  
 Quando una donna apparve santa e presta  
 L'unghesso me per far colei confusa.  
 'O Virgilio, o Virgilio, chi è questa ?'  
 Fieramente diceva ; ed ei venia  
 Con gli occhi fitti pure in quella onesta.  
 L'altra prendeva, e dinanzi l'apria  
 Fendendo i drappi, e mostravami il ventre ;  
 Quel mi svegliò col puzzo che n' uscia.<sup>2</sup>*

In that hour's chilliness when the heat of day  
 Tempers the coldness of the moon no more,  
 Vanquished by Earth, or oft by Saturn's sway,  
 When geomancers in the East, before  
 The dawn's white light subduing soon the gray,  
 Read of their major fortune the bright score,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Purg.* XXXI, 45 ; *Parad.* XII, 8 ; and *Epist.* V, iv, where Dante says, 'Nec seducat illudens cupiditas, more Sirenum, nescio qua dulcedine vigiliam rationis mortificans. . . .' Hugo of St. Victor writes, 'De Sirenarum seu Sirenum natura.' <sup>2</sup> *Purg.* XIX, 1-33.

There came, in dreaming, a woman to my sight,  
 Stammering, cross-eyed, maimed in both hands, each one  
 Of her feet clubbed ; with countenance dead-white.  
 I looked on her, and even as the sun  
 Comforts the cold limbs all benumbed by night,  
 So gave my gaze a glibness to her tongue ;  
 Her shape grew straight, and love's lost colouring ran  
 Back through her cheeks, as love would have them, young.  
 Then, with her speech thus loosened, she began  
 To sing so, not to listen had been pain :  
 'I'm the sweet Siren. I am she who can  
 Misguide the mariner in the middle main ;  
 So full of pleasaunce is my voice to hear !  
 I turned Ulysses, with the notes I pour,  
 From his vague wanderings ; and whoso gives ear,  
 To grow familiar, seldom giveth o'er  
 Delight in following me so wholly dear ;  
 Who learns to love me, leaves me nevermore.'  
 Scarce was her mouth shut when a lady came  
 Up close beside me, rapid in her tread,  
 Whose holy mien that other put to shame.  
 'O Virgil, Virgil !' angrily she said ;  
 'What wretch is this ?' and while my master bent  
 His steps toward her, fixed by her innocent face ;  
 She seized that other, and her garment rent  
 Before her bosom, and disrobed the place  
 Which broke my slumber with its noisome scent.

— PARSONS.

Benvenuto da Imola,<sup>1</sup> skilled in the secrets of allegory, discerns in these hideous attributes — the stammering, the squint, the twisted body, maimed hands, and deadly pallor — the physical effects of greed, trickery,

<sup>1</sup> *Comentum super Dantis Aldigherij Comoediam*. Toynbee quotes him at length. See *Dante Dictionary*, s. v. 'Sirena.'

drunken gluttony, flattery, and lust. Though gross vices bring about physical vileness and deformity, the interpretation of Benvenuto seems valuable only because it embodies a belief of that time.

However well Dante describes this horror, the vision was not new, for to many a pious celibate that 'Protean monster of hell' appeared at first in pleasing guise, only to assume some loathsome shape that revealed the demon. Cæsarius of Heisterbach tells how a certain cleric sang so sweetly that his song was thought delicious by all. But a priest came along one day, and catching the sweetness of the zither-like tone,<sup>1</sup> said, 'That is no man's voice, but the devil's,' and straightway, to the wonder of all, he exorcised the devil, who went forth, whereupon the corpse collapsed and stank. All knew then that the body had long been the plaything of a demon.<sup>2</sup>

#### THE GIANTS

There were giants in the earth in those days. — GENESIS vi. 4.

Dante believed in giants.<sup>3</sup> He put Briareus, Ephialtes, and Antæus<sup>4</sup> almost at the bottom of Hell,

<sup>1</sup> 'Et cytharæ illius dulcedinem aure percipiens. . . .' Brunetto Latini says of the Sirens, 'la premiere chantait merveilleusement de sa bouche; l'autre de flaüt et de canon (Giamboni: 'di cetera'); la tierce de citole.'

<sup>2</sup> *Dialogus Miraculorum*, Distinctio XII, cap. iv, 'De clerico cuius corpus diabolus loco animæ vegetabat.'

<sup>3</sup> See *De Mon.* II, x, 84-91. *De V. E.* I, vii, 24-28. See also *Conv.* III, iii, 51-66, and note 64-66, which are hardly gratuitous. Cf. also *Inf.* XXXI, 49-57. The Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, also believed in giants; see his *Summa*, Pr. pars, qu. li, art. 3.

<sup>4</sup> See the adequate articles as to these giants in *Dante Dictionary*.



where they were dwarfed by the immensity of Lucifer, and he implies that the Titans — Tityus and Typhon<sup>1</sup> — were also warders at the mouth of Circle IX of Hell. Though the Bible hardly warrants such a conclusion, Orosius and St. Augustine made a giant of Nimrod,<sup>2</sup> and him, too, we find doomed with the others, half sinner, half demon. None of them had been loyal to the gods or to God. Our poet saw another giant in a vision, and he, too, was a monster of evil.<sup>3</sup>

From the brink of the eighth circle Dante descried through the foggy gloom shapes that seemed like towers. One was Nimrod.

As long and large a visage he upreared  
 As is Saint Peter's pine at Rome, and such  
 His other bones proportionately appeared :  
 Since from the bank that girt his waist so much  
 Of his vast form was visible that three  
 Tall Frieslanders could not have reached his hair ;  
 Thirty good palms of him mine eye could see,  
 Below where men their cloak-clasps use to wear.  
 'Rafel mai amech izabi almi !' Thus  
 The savage mouth, which hymns of sweeter note  
 Would ill agree with, straight saluted us.  
 'Fool,' said my Leader, 'hush thy clamorous throat.  
 Soul of confusion ! With thy horn alone  
 Vent thy brute fury, for that brays it best.  
 Search on thy neck there ; thou wilt find the zone  
 That binds it dangling round thy giant breast.'  
 Then thus to me : 'The slave is self-accused ;  
 Nimrod that is, to whose bad thought is due

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXXI, 124. See *Dante Dictionary*, s.v. 'Tifo' and 'Tizio.'

<sup>2</sup> See *Dante Dictionary*, s.v. 'Nembrotto.'

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* XXXII, 151 ff. ; XXXIII, 40-45.



That in the world one language is not used ;  
 There let him stand, nor vain discourse pursue,  
 For every language is to him a sound,  
 Like to his others ; jargon without sense.'<sup>1</sup>

— PARSONS.

Nimrod is not only imagined as being some thirty-five feet high, but he speaks gibberish whose meaning various commentators have tried hard to divine, though Dante expressly states that the language of Nimrod is known to none. As in the northern myths, these giants are dull enough to be outwitted by men. By flattering Antæus with the hope that Dante can give him fame, Virgil coaxes Antæus to lower himself and Dante down toward Lucifer.<sup>2</sup>

#### LUCIFER

Though Satan knew how to take on shapes of dragons, wasps, and toads, of monks and damsels, or other shapes so numerous that all the windows of the Gothic cathedrals would scarcely contain them, there existed for centuries in the heated fancies of credulous men one cause of all wickedness—the ancient adversary,<sup>3</sup> the liar and father of lies,<sup>4</sup> the Evil One. Him Dante put at the bottom of Hell, with his gigantic body sheathed in ice from the middle of his breast. He is the creature who once was beautiful, but, having dared to raise his brows against his Maker, he was hurled down from Heaven to the Antipodes. The land fled before him and made our hemisphere.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXXI, 58-81.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XXXI, 115-145.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* XI, 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* XXIII, 144.

<sup>5</sup> *Inf.* XXXIV, *passim*.

Lucifer, then, is at the centre of the World, and there imprisoned forever he fans with six batlike wings—banners of Hell—whose motion freezes the stream Cocytus. He has three faces,—the one in front, vermillion. Over each shoulder are the others; that on the right is yellowish, that on the left black as faces from the head waters of the river Nile. Beneath each face issued two mighty wings, as befitted so huge a fowl, and at the stirring of these six wings, which wore no feathers, but, batlike, were covered with thick hair, rose three freezing winds. With six eyes he wept, and down his three chins trickled his tears and bloody foam. In each mouth he was crunching a sinner; but his biting was nothing to the clawing which sometimes left the sinner's backbone bare of skin. The sinner in greatest pain was Judas, whose legs were writhing. Of the two others one was Brutus, in the black snout; the other Cassius, both traitors like Lucifer.

Now, when the two poets had seen all, they bode their time; then Virgil, with Dante clinging to him, fastened to one of the shaggy wings and climbed down from fell to fell, and, reaching the thigh, set Dante where he seemed to behold Lucifer upside down, for they had turned now at the point whither all weights are drawn and were making their way out to look again upon the stars.<sup>1</sup>

Neither this ice-hell in which Lucifer is frozen originated in the mind of Dante nor did Lucifer. Lucifer is a Gothic demon. His body is the product of the allegorical tendency that built churches in the form of a cross, and strove, sometimes with gloomy, sometimes

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXXIV, *passim*.

with playful fantasy, to perpetuate theological imagery and dogma. It was an art that revelled in the grotesque and often tore nature asunder in order to get forms that should symbolise ideas corresponding to no single natural truth. As God, then, was the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and as each of these divisions of the indivisible Trinity signified Power, Wisdom, and Love, so there arose in opposition a triune demon. A Christ



THE CHRIST OF SALERNO

of Salerno, the product, perhaps, of Byzantine influence, is represented with three faces.<sup>1</sup> An Anglo-Saxon manuscript of the early eleventh century shows a Satanic image in which a second face is sprouting behind the left ear.<sup>2</sup> 'The three-headed hoar-giant of the Edda, Hrim-Grimnir, who lives at the door of

death,' and Triglaf the triune deity of the Slavs are closely akin to Dante's Lucifer.<sup>3</sup> A three-headed Satan appears in a French miniature of the thirteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Boccaccio alludes to the Lucifer of San Gallo; Sansovino says that a devil with three mouths was painted in the church of San Gallo at Florence, and, finally, in the

<sup>1</sup> For reproduction, see *Die Gartenlaube*, No. 47, 1882.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ARTURO GRAF, '*Demonologia di Dante*,' in his *Miti, Leggende e Superstizioni del Medio Evo*, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. CARUS, *History of the Devil*, p. 249.

<sup>4</sup> DIDRON, *Iconographie Chrétienne*, p. 544.

church of Sant' Angelo at Formis, near Capua, a great painting, deemed a work of the eleventh century, represents Lucifer crunching Judas, while a twelfth century sculpture in the church of Saint Basil at Étampes represents Lucifer grinding three sinners.<sup>1</sup>

'When Bishop Otto of Bamberg converted the Pomeranians to Christianity he broke, in 1124, the three-headed Triglaf idol in the temple of Stettin and sent its head to Pope Honorius II. at Rome.'<sup>2</sup> If, as Dino Compagni asserts, Dante went on an embassy to Rome in 1301, he may have got an inspiration for his Lucifer from the triune deity of the Slavs.<sup>3</sup> But it is more likely by far that the notion of a three-headed Lucifer had long before spread throughout Europe, and that Dante invented little when he devised this monster with a sinner in each mouth and with batlike wings; for the wings of bats were as habitually attached to devils as were the wings of birds to angels.

Nevertheless, Dante's entire conception of Lucifer remains the mightiest type of Evil in all time; for it grew in the Devil's prime in the mind of one of the three greatest poets the world has ever known. In the existence of Lucifer Dante believed as sincerely as he believed in the existence of God;<sup>4</sup> but like all other men



A THREE-HEADED  
SATAN  
After Didron

<sup>1</sup> Cf. GRAF, *op. cit.* p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. CARUS, *op. cit.* p. 249.

<sup>3</sup> A suggestion by Dr. Krause, cited by Carus.

<sup>4</sup> See *Dante Dictionary*, s.v. 'Lucifero.'

he had to make shift to find in the horrors of our known world the shapes that were to embody his ideal of the creature from whom all woes come. As both Dante and his beloved St. Thomas Aquinas saw in the Trinity Power, Wisdom, and Love, so Dante made visible in the three faces of Lucifer the very essence of Impotence, Ignorance, and Hate. Such are the origin and expression of Dante's conception of the Evil One.



## CHAPTER V

### THE LOWER ANIMALS

ALTHOUGH there existed in Dante's time theories as to genera and species, none of the keenest thinkers, neither the Encyclopedists, Vincent of Beauvais, Albert of Bollstädt, and Thomas of Cantimpré,<sup>1</sup> nor the metaphysical Thomas Aquinas,<sup>2</sup> nor, finally, Dante Alighieri, made any scientific application of those terms. To Dante man belongs to one species<sup>3</sup> and is an animal,<sup>4</sup> as he is to all Dante's contemporaries and to ourselves. Yet Dante gave to man a place to himself in the Universe because he conceived that man alone has a reasoning soul, immortality, and a duty to himself and to God.<sup>5</sup>

In nature there is an incredibly delicate gradation of

<sup>1</sup> For an account of these three, see J. V. CARUS, *Geschichte der Zoologie*.

<sup>2</sup> Com. on *Physic. Arist.*, lib. VII, cap. 4, lec. viii, § 8; see also VII, cap. 3, lec. v, § 5, where he says, ' . . . inter omnes qualitates, figuræ maxime consequuntur et demonstrant speciem rerum. Quod maxime in plantis et animalibus patet, in quibus nullo certiori iudicio diversitas specierum diiudicari potest, quam diversitate figurarum.'

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., *De Mon.* I, iii, 39-45, 78-82; *De V. E.* I, ii, 36-43; xvi, 7-25; II, i, 44-48; *Conv.* IV, xvi, 104-106; *Conv.* II, v, 25-28; *Purg.* XVIII, 49 ff.; *Conv.* IV, xxii, 47-56.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. BOCCACCIO (Lez. 8), 'L' umana spezie, È l' umana generazione, spezie di questo genere che noi diciamo animali.' *Inf.* V, 88; *Parad.* XIX, 85; *Canz.* X, 101; *Conv.* II, ix, 78-87; III, vii, 101-102.

<sup>5</sup> See chapter on 'Man,' p. 12.

things. Millions of species have lived and gone, but still there exists a great chain whose links reach from a pebble up to man. But where between the pebble and man does the soul begin? Where is the beginning of life?

‘The soul,’ writes Dante, ‘has three principal powers,—to live, to feel, and to reason. . . . The vegetative power by which we live is the foundation upon which we feel, that is, see, hear, taste, smell, and touch; and this vegetative power of itself is a soul, as we see in all the plants. The sensitive soul cannot exist without it, as there is nothing that feels that has not life. And this sensitive soul is the basis of the intellectual, that is, of reason; and therefore in living mortal beings the reasoning power is not found without the sentient, but the sensitive soul is found without the rational, as in beasts and birds and fishes, and all the lower animals.’<sup>1</sup> Thus Dante denies reason to the lower animals. But if the lower animals have not reason, how do they live? What is their motive power? Instinct,<sup>2</sup>—the answer is plain. But what is the difference between instinct and reason? In modern science instinct is an inherited habit which varies ever so slightly from parent to offspring according to the exigencies of nature, and in every animal, including man. To Dante instinct is appetite, an in-born motive power, a tendency to act like an animated mechanism. It is the only main mental faculty of the lower animals. It is the bird’s tendency to make a nest,

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* III, ii, 85–112, cf. 139–154. Translated by K. HILLARD; *The Banquet*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., London, 1889.

<sup>2</sup> *De V. E.* I, ii, 33–36, ‘Inferioribus quoque animalibus, cum solo naturae instinctu ducantur,’ etc. Cf. ST. THOMAS, *Summa*, Pr. sec., qu. xiii, art. 2.

the bee's to make honey.<sup>1</sup> With a psychological crudeness due to an entire lack of experimental science, Dante puts between instinct and reason a wall which as an observer of nature he is more than once forced to break down; for we shall find that he attributes a higher mentality than mere instinct to various animals.

'Since the lower animals are led by instinct alone, it was unnecessary to provide them with language; because all of one species have the same acts and passions, and thus through their own are able to know those of others. Among those of different species, not only would speech have been needless, but even harmful, since no friendly intercourse would have taken place between them.'<sup>2</sup> Had Dante ever seen some barnyard fowl roosting placidly on its favourite cow, or a big dog carrying gently in his mouth his friend the kitten, he might have got a hint valuable to his philosophy. What Dante says indicates that he had failed to observe two of the most obvious facts in the life of animals. Not only is there a very great difference in the acts and passions of animals of the same species, but they frequently make friendship with animals of different species.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XVIII, 49 ff., *Parad.* I, 109 ff., XVIII, 111; *Conv.* I, i, 5-6; IV, vi, 100-102. Commenting on Aristotle's opinion as to ants and spiders, St. Thomas Aquinas declares that nature, not intellect, is the moving power. *Physic. Arist.* lib. II, cap. 8, lec. xiii, § 5.

<sup>2</sup> *De V. E.* I, ii, 33-43. Albertus Magnus treats of animals' language in *De Animal.* lib. V, tract. ii, cap. 2. He notes the difference of male and female, the effect of breeding time, the cock's crowing over a victory, and the rivalry of crowing contests. Intelligent speech, however, is confined to man.

<sup>3</sup> WHITE, *Selborne*, XLVIII: 'If I admire when I see how much congenerous birds love to congregate, I am the more struck when

Lactantius, whose dark bigotry is lighted at times by flashes of thought, declares that religious worship is peculiar to man. 'Other things, even those that are thought to belong only to man, are found also in the other animals, for, when they mark and distinguish each other's voices by signs of their own, they seem to talk; also, there appears in them something like laughter when, with drooping ears and grinning, and with a wanton eye, they frolic with men or with their own mates and young. Do they not share in something like mutual love and fondness? The very ones that look forward and store away food have, as it were, foresight. In many are perceived signs of reason, too. For, since they seek their own good, shun harm, avoid dangers, make their hiding-places with several outlets, surely they have some understanding. Can any one deny reason in them since they often give man himself the slip? Furthermore, those whose business it is to make honey, having settled on the places assigned them, fortify their camp, making their abode with indescribable art, and serve their king (*sic*). I know not whether there be in these a perfect foresight, and thus it is uncertain whether the traits attributed to man are common to other living things; assuredly they are devoid of religion.' <sup>1</sup>

Galen,<sup>2</sup> a heathen physician of the second century I see incongruous ones in such strict amity. If we do not much wonder to see a flock of rooks usually attended by a flock of daws, yet it is strange that the former should have a flight of starlings for their associates.' For further overwhelming evidence the reader may consult Romanes and Darwin.

<sup>1</sup> MIGNE, *Patrologia*, vol. 6, col. 374.

<sup>2</sup> *De Solertia Animal.*



whom Dante honoured, expresses an opinion more heretical than that of Lactantius; but such views are not in the stream of thought that flowed down from Aristotle to Thomas Aquinas and carried on its bosom almost every writer of the Middle Ages, including Dante.

Dante denies the lower animals free will,<sup>1</sup> which is the prerogative of man and the angels.<sup>2</sup> He also denies them immortality,<sup>3</sup> declares that they have never changed,<sup>4</sup> and implies that they cannot sin.<sup>5</sup> Sinfulness is possible only when the will is free, and the will is free only in man.

Following an immemorial and far from laudable habit, Dante makes 'bestiality' mean an unnatural condition of man. Thus, Vanni Fucci, a sacrilegious plunderer, says to Dante: 'I rained down from Tuscany not long ago into this cruel hole. I liked not a human, but a bestial life, — mule that I was; and Pistoia was my fit lair.'<sup>6</sup> Thus, also, certain Sodomites declare that they did not follow human law;<sup>7</sup> and Florence is 'bestial.'<sup>8</sup> In the *Banquet* Dante speaks of treachery, falsehood, theft, plundering, deceit, and their like, as 'inhuman sins.'<sup>9</sup> The enumeration scarcely betokens profound knowledge of man's nature or of that of the beasts. Such a theory is based, not on zoölogy, but on conceit. Man fondly imagines himself a borrower of

<sup>1</sup> *De Mon.* I, xii, 17-37. Cf. ST. THOMAS, *Summa*, Pr. pars, qu. lxxxiii, art. I.

<sup>5</sup> *Inf.* XI, 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Parad.* V, 19-24.

<sup>6</sup> *Inf.* XXIV, 122-126.

<sup>3</sup> *Conv.* II, ix, 80-95.

<sup>7</sup> *Purg.* XXVI, 82-87.

<sup>4</sup> *Conv.* IV, xiv, 85-99.

<sup>8</sup> *Parad.* XVII, 67.

<sup>9</sup> *Conv.* I, xii, 79-82.



sins often far more common in himself than in any other animal. Once, at least, Dante seems to have hit upon the truth, for there occurs in the *Banquet* an almost scientific theory as to the relation of other animals to man. 'In the intellectual order of the universe there is an ascent and descent by almost continuous steps from the highest to the lowest, as we see in the physical order, and between the angelic nature, which is intellectual, and the human soul there is no step at all, but they are, as it were, on one continuous grade; so, between the human soul and the most perfect soul belonging to the brutes there is again no interval; and as we see many men so vile and of such low nature that they seem hardly other than beasts, therefore we must also assert and firmly believe that there are men so noble and of so lofty a nature that they are scarcely other than angels, otherwise humanity would not extend in both directions [through this scale], which could not be.'<sup>1</sup>

This is a nobly heretical gleam, but only a gleam, which may have stolen on the poet unawares; for in medieval authors one happens occasionally on thoughts so contrary to their whole philosophy that one is almost as much taken off his guard as if one were to come upon a believer in fetiches and holy water gloating over some heresy of Darwin.

As a dogmatist moralising about the life of animals, their place in nature, their habits and mortality, Dante

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* III, vii, 69-88, translated by K. Hillard. For upholding a doctrine like this, and for other reasons, Vanini had his tongue torn out and was strangled at Toulouse on February 9, 1619.

offers some confusion. Not one great truth did he maintain, but he simply followed in the tracks of those fettered reasoners who had gone before. As a poet he sees most often with his own eyes; as a poet he thinks best. In poetry he seems to have gone more fully through the wonderful realm of nature. In poetry Dante was less hindered by dogma; and though he touched many a conventional chord in his symphony,<sup>1</sup> we shall find that he knew also how to make new harmonies. No art ever wrought well that falsely interpreted life. This is why there is an abyss between Dante the dogmatist and Dante the poet.

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* in *Inf.* II, 1-3; *Canz.* XV, 33-35; *Son.* XLII.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE MONKEY OR APE

*Simia quam similis, turpissima bestia, nobis!*<sup>1</sup> — ENNIUS.

EVEN though it be true that jugglers were often accompanied by monkeys whose antics excited the derisive curiosity of medieval idlers,<sup>2</sup> there exists no evidence that Dante ever stopped for a scornful glance at such a show. His characterisations of the monkey are absolutely conventional,<sup>3</sup> and merely come like an echo from hard rocks. A sinner tells him:—

*Sì vedrai ch' io son l' ombra di Capocchio,  
Che falsai li metalli con alchimia,  
E ti dei ricordar, se ben t' adocchio,  
Com' io fui di natura buona scimia.*<sup>4</sup>

And thou shalt see I am Capocchio's shade,  
Who metals falsified by alchemy;  
Thou must remember, if I well descry thee,  
How I a skilful ape of nature was. — LONGFELLOW.

<sup>1</sup> 'The monkey, ugly beast, how like ourselves!' — a verse known to Hugo of St. Victor (lib. II, cap. 2), who says, 'Simiæ Latine vocantur eo quod in eis similitudo rationis humanæ sentitur.'

<sup>2</sup> See *Bibliographica*, London, 1896, vol. II, pp. 326–328, and FR. DIEZ, *Poesie der Troubadours*, 2d ed., p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> The monkey's imitateness is found in some versions of the *Physiologus* and in many bestiaries. Cf., e.g., ALEX. NECKAM, pp. 208–210; *Tresor*, p. 250; a Provençal bestiary of cent. XIII, ed. by BARTSCH, *Chrestomathie Provençale*, 1880, col. 333 ff.: 'Lo simi vol contrafar tot cant ve far.'

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* XXIX, 136–139.

The Sardinians spoke an Italian closer in some ways to Latin than was the Tuscan. Our poet, ignorant of the historical reasons for this phenomenon, cuts them off with a sneer,<sup>1</sup> 'Again, let us throw aside the Sardinians, who are not Latins, but to the Latins seem to belong; since they alone appear to be without a vernacular, imitating grammar<sup>2</sup> as monkeys imitate men, for they say *Domus nova* and *Dominus meus*.'<sup>3</sup>

Once more the monkey fares ill; for Dante declares that, notwithstanding appearances, and despite what any one may say, it is false that any beast does 'acts' or goes by rule, as appears in the monkey and some others. They cannot, 'for they lack the reason from which these things proceed.'<sup>4</sup>

It is evident, then, that the monkey never led our poet from the straight and narrow path of orthodoxy. Indeed, no medieval philosopher seems to have come to any other conclusion with regard to the monkey than that he is a kind of imitative caricature of man.

<sup>1</sup> *De V. E.* I, xi, 42-47, 'Sardos etiam qui non Latini sunt, sed Latinis adsociandi videntur, eiciamus: quoniam soli sine proprio vulgari esse videntur, grammaticam tanquam simiæ homines imitantes, nam: *Domus nova*, et *Dominus meus*, loquuntur.'

<sup>2</sup> Grammar (grammatica) of course meant Latin in the Middle Ages.

<sup>3</sup> By chance Dante has chosen two expressions wherein the Sardinian of his time had not diverged at all from the Latin introduced by the conquering Romans about 227 B.C.

<sup>4</sup> *Conv.* III, vii, 104-113.

## CHAPTER VII

### DANTE'S MEETING WITH THE THREE BEASTS

*Ad varia quoque negotia profecturi ex primo animalis occursum  
votorum auspicia capiebant: quæ si læta fuissent cœptum alacres  
iter carpebant, sin tristia, reflexo cursu propria repetebant.*

— SAXO GRAMMATICUS *on the Slavs.*

THE prophet Jeremiah utters a wild cry against evil-doers who have broken the yoke and burst the bonds, 'Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evening shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many and their backslidings are increased.'<sup>1</sup> To this mysterious cry of vengeance Dante Alighieri gave a new meaning. Not only did he see a special symbol in each of the three beasts, but he gave to the whole passage an application derived from a source that lies deep in the mythology of the Middle Ages.

In the *Divine Comedy* Dante feigns to have met at early morning, near a gloomy wood, three beasts, an ounce, a lion, and a wolf.<sup>2</sup> Such a meeting was omi-

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah v, 6.

<sup>2</sup> In the vision of the renowned Abbot Joachim of Calabria, whom Dante endows with the prophetic gift (*Parad.* XII, 140-141), the soul, not yet let into the garden of heaven, is first stopped in a dreadful place by lynxes, lions, and serpents. See CAHIER, *Mélanges d'Archéologie*, II, 16.



nous of good or evil; for, according to folklore, whoever ran across some living thing near the dawning could read in the character of the creature met his change of fortune. To meet a priest constituted an evil omen. It was bad luck to have a hare run across one's path; for the hare is faint-hearted. A wolf, on the contrary, was a lucky omen.<sup>1</sup> The ounce and the lion, being exotic animals, had no place in this phase of folklore, except in Dante, in whose poem they seem to forebode neither good nor evil, but to be simply embodiments of sin, man's consciousness of his wickedness, which, at a certain point on life's road, takes on the form of three dreadful beasts. Thus Dante distinctly shows the influence of a very ancient phase of folklore, which perhaps never held sway in the people's minds more powerfully than in his time. Dante's meeting with the Siren<sup>2</sup> is only another proof that he was steeped in popular superstitions; for it was held good luck to meet a bawd in the early morning, and when Dante met the Siren he was on his way through Purgatory to Heaven, and it was a little before dawn.

<sup>1</sup> See GRIMM, *Deutsche Mythologie*, chapter on 'Angang,' pp. 1072-1086.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter on 'The Siren,' p. 66 ff.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE OUNCE — LA LONZA

HAVING strayed midway on life's road, Dante found himself in a gloomy wood. How he came there he did not know, so drowsy was he at that point where he abandoned the true way. But having reached the foot of a hill that lay at the end of the dreadful valley, he looked upward and beheld the rays of the planet that leads men aright on every path. Then his fear was somewhat stilled, and like one who, breathing hard, reaches the shore and turns back to the dangerous water, gazing long; so his soul, still fleeing, turned back to behold the life of sin. The poet now tells how he was thwarted from going further by three bestial foes:—

*Poi ch' ei posato un poco il corpo lasso,  
Ripresi via per la piaggia diserta,  
Sì che il piè fermo sempre era il più basso;  
Ed ecco, quasi al cominciar dell' erta,  
Una lonza leggiera<sup>1</sup> e presta molto,  
Che di pel maculato era coperta.  
E non mi si partia dinanzi al volto;  
Anzi impediva tanto il mio cammino,  
Ch' io fui per ritornar più volte volto;<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Tristan*, vss. 199–200:—

'La biche, et le chevreul se treuvent sans danger  
Pres du cervier cruel, et de l'once leger.'

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Dante means that the rough and gloomy wood of fearful doubt was almost preferable to the lust of the flesh, which is what the ounce seems to mean, as I shall try to show.

*Tempo era dal principio del mattino ;  
 E il sol montava su con quelle stelle  
 Ch' eran con lui, quando l' amor divino  
 Mosse da prima quelle cose belle ;  
 Sì che a bene sperar m' era cagione  
 Di quella fera alla gaietta pelle,  
 L' ora del tempo, e la dolce stagione :  
 Ma non sì, che paura non mi desse  
 La vista, che mi apparve, d' un leone.  
 Questi pareva, che contra me venesse  
 Con la testa alta e con rabbiosa fame,  
 Sì che pareva che l' aer ne temesse :  
 Ed una lupa, che di tutte brame  
 Sembiava carca nella sua magrezza,  
 E molte genti fe' già viver grame.<sup>1</sup>*

' And lo ! near the beginning of the slope, an ounce,<sup>2</sup> light and very fleet, covered with a dappled skin, who would not quit my sight, but so hindered my journey that I was more than once bent on returning. It was near the morning hour, and the sun was rising with

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* I, 28-51.

<sup>2</sup> Apparently no translator except Butler has rendered *lonza* by 'ounce.' Boyd, Wright, Cary, Hindley, Drayman, O'Donnell, Brookshenk, Thomas, W. M. Rossetti, Parsons, Longfellow, Ford, Tomlinson, Pike, Minchin, and Plumptre (revised edition) have 'panther.' J. Carlyle, Plumptre (first edition), Bannerman, Pollock, Peabody, Wilkie, Sibbold, D. Johnston, Sullivan, Musgrave, and Lee-Hamilton have 'leopard.' Ramsay has 'pard.' C. Potter, 'some forest beast,' 'a spotted pard.' C. E. Norton, 'she-leopard' (cf. Landino). Cayley renders 'lynx.' Perhaps all the French translators except E. Littré have 'panthère.' Most of the Germans render 'panther-thier'; a few by 'pardel,' or 'pardel-thier'; three by 'panther.' Greek translation reads *πάρδαλις*. The oldest French translation (thought by Renier and perhaps by Stengel to date early in the

those stars that were with that orb when love divine first moved those beautiful things ; so that the hour of the day and the sweet season were my good cause for hoping well as to that wild beast with the pretty skin, yet not so much but that dread smote me at the sight of a lion. He seemed to be advancing against me with his head high and with ravening hunger, so that the air seemed to fear. And then a she-wolf, which with all greediness seemed laden in her leanness and had already brought many into misery.'

Driven back by the wolf, Dante meets with Virgil, who becomes his guide through the 'grievous realm.' The two poets, having descended into the depths of Hell, come to a point where Virgil uses a strange means to get still farther down. Dante says :—

*Io aveva una corda intorno cinta,  
E con essa pensai alcuna volta  
Prender la lonza alla pelle dipinta.  
Poscia che l' ebbi tutta da me sciolta  
Sì come il Duca m' avea comandato,  
Porsila a lui aggroppata e ravvolta.  
Ond' ei si volse inver lo destro lato,  
Ed alquanto di lungi dalla sponda  
La gittò giuso in quell' alto burrato.  
'E' pur convien che novità risponda,'*

sixteenth or late in the fifteenth century), reads, in MS. of Turin, 'une leonce'; MS. of Vienna, 'un once.' The Catalan fragment (Febrer's translation, 1428 A.D.) renders :—

*'E vets vos quasi al començar de l'erta  
Una llonca parda presta e lleugera  
Qui d'un gay pel virat era cuberta.'*

E. Littré translates, 'Es vous une once legere et moult aperte.'

*Dicea fra me medesimo, 'al nuovo cenno  
Che il Maestro con l' occhio sì seconda.'*<sup>1</sup>

'I had a cord girt round me and with it I had thought once to catch the ounce with the painted skin. Having unloosed this wholly, as my Leader had bidden me, I handed it to him, knotted and coiled. Whereupon he turned toward the right, and, at a little distance from the brink, he cast it down into the deep black hole. "Surely some strange thing must answer," I bethought me, "to this unwonted signal which my Master so follows with his eye." '—The response is the monster Geryon, 'the foul likeness of fraud,' who lowers the two poets into another pit of the nether world.

Having before us now all that Dante says of the ounce, we shall see whether any light can be shed upon the puzzle by examining various documents of antiquity and of the Middle Ages. Without the shadow of a doubt Dante borrowed his conception of the three beasts from Jeremiah;<sup>2</sup> and the *pardus* of the Vulgate, which was, of course, Dante's version of the Bible, corresponds in a sense to *la lonza*, the ounce of Dante. Jeremiah cries to wrong-doers, that 'a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evening shall spoil them, a pard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many and their backslidings are increased.' Elsewhere<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah exclaims, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the pard his

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XVI, 106-117.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah v, 6.

<sup>3</sup> xiii, 23.



spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.'

St. Jerome takes the pard of Jeremiah to mean the onslaught of Alexander upon India.<sup>1</sup> His contemporary, St. Ambrose, avers that the pard's variety of hue signifies the various impulses of the soul. This, he goes on, is taken to refer, not only to the figure, but to the fickleness of wrath, because the Jewish people, stained by the dusky, restless, and fickle mutations of their faithless mind and soul and spirit, could not cling to the grace of a good purpose; nor would they return to any bettering or correction, having once taken on a bestial wickedness.<sup>2</sup> Four hundred years later Rabanus Maurus<sup>3</sup> follows Jerome as to the onslaught of Alexander, and increases the mystification by saying, 'Some use this testimony against the Church, wishing to spread the report of various natures, and so great do they declare the blackness or variety of sins that they cannot become glistening with the beauty of one hue. These persons forget,' writes Rabanus, 'that to God all things are possible.' Elsewhere (*De Univ.* VIII, cap. 1) this writer, describing the panther, says she is friendly to all animals except the dragon. 'A second pard (after the panther) is a spotted kind, very swift and bloodthirsty, for in a jump it leaps to the death. The pard, furthermore, signifies the devil full of divers vices, or any sinner bespattered with the spots of crimes and of many errors.

<sup>1</sup> *Comment. in Jeremiam Proph.*, lib. I, cap. 5, 'Alexandri impetum præfigurans, et velocem de Occidente usque ad Indiam percussione,' etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Hexameron*, lib. VI, cap. iii, 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Expos. super Jeremiam*, lib. III, cap. 5.

Wherefore the prophet says, "Æthiops non mutavit pellem, et pardus varietatem suam." Likewise the pard is antichrist, besmirched with the spots of wickedness, as in the Apocalypse: "Et bestia ascendebat de mari, similis erat pardo" (*Apoc.* XIII, 1-2). Elsewhere, however, it is written, "Habitabit lupus cum agno, et pardus cum hædo cubabit" (*Isaiah* xi, 6). This was fulfilled at the coming of Christ, since those who once were ferocious live with the innocent, and those who were befouled with the spots of sins (*errorum maculis*) are converted through penitence to the truth of Faith. The leopard,' adds Rabanus, 'is born of the adultery of a lioness and a pard.'<sup>1</sup>

Finally, one Hugo a Sancto Caro (Huc de Saint Chers), who lived in the first half of the thirteenth century, commenting on Jeremiah v, 6, gives sensuality, pride, and greed as the characteristics of youth, middle age, and old age.<sup>2</sup>

The panther in the Middle Ages was believed by many to sleep three days, then to awake and raise her voice, whereupon there came forth from her a sweet odour, and all animals from far and near followed her voice and the fragrance. Only the dragon was afraid and hid away.<sup>3</sup> The panther is Christ. Dante unquestionably knew this story.

<sup>1</sup> LAUCHERT, *Geschichte des Physiologus*, pp. 199-200, says, 'Boppe wünscht, wie der Leopard als Bastard gefleckt ist, so sollte ein richer zage [a rich poltroon], der eben so schnell wie dieses Thier von der Ehre zur Schande ist, auch buntgefleckt sein, zu seiner Schande, damit man ihn gleich als Kebskind erkenne.' Cf. ISIDOR, *Etymol.* lib. XIII, cap. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cited by Witte. See his comment on *lonza*.

<sup>3</sup> HILDEBERTUS CENOM. in Migne, vol. 171, col. 1223. In the

The lynx was known for his sharp glance, and for his envious habit of denying to man a curing stone called lyngurium, which he carried in a part of his body. Brunetto Latini declares the lynx could see through a wall or a mountain! 'Une autre maniere de loups sont que on apele cerviers ou lubernes [other MSS. read 'lupernes'] qui sont pomelés de noires taches autressi comme l'once [*Ital. version*: Un' altra maniera di lupi sono che si chiamano lupi cervieri, che sono taccati di nero come leonza], mais des autres choses est il semblables au loup, et est di si clere veue que si oil percent les murs et les mons, et ne porte que i fil, et est la plus obliouse chose dou monde, car la ou il manjue son past et il regarde par aventure une autre chose, il oblie maintenant ce que il manjoit, si que il ne set revenir, ainz le pert dou tout. Et si dient cil qui le sevent que de son piz naist une pierre precieuse qui est apelée liguires; ice cognoist bien la beste meismes selonc ce que li home dient qui li ont veu covrir s'orine de sablon, par une envie de nature, que tel pierre ne parviegne as homes.'<sup>1</sup>

*Bestiaire Divin*, by GUILLAUME LE CLERC DE NORMANDIE, ed. by C. Hippeau, Caen, 1852, p. 256: —

'La beste qui a non pantiere  
En dreit romanz love cerviere,' etc.

Cf. PHILIPPE DE THAÛN, Bartsch, *Chrest.* col. 88 ff., and in edition by E. Walberg, Lund. 1900, pp. 18–22. Cf. also GERVAISE, ed. by P. Meyer, *Romania* I, pp. 420 ff., and BRUNETTO LATINI, *Tresor*, p. 249. St. Hildegard sees in panther symbol of vanity. See *Physica*, lib. VII, cap. 7, in Migne, vol. 197, col. 1319. Albertus Magnus disbelieves story of sweet odour. Cf. chapter on 'The Panther,' p. 130.

<sup>1</sup> *Tresor*, p. 248. Cf. SOLINUS, *Polyhistor*, II, 37, also ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De Animal.* lib. XXII, tract. ii, cap. 1.

Most of this description is borrowed almost word for word from Isidor of Seville (*Etym.* XII, ii, 20).

The lynx, then, or 'lupus cerverius,' 'cervarius,' etc., covered up the precious lyngurium in the sand lest it might be of utility to man. Not a few scholars see a reference to the *lonza* (ounce) in words uttered to Dante by Ciacco with regard to Florence:—

*Superbia, invidia ed avarizia sono  
Le tre faville che hanno i cori accesi.*<sup>1</sup>

'Pride, envy, and avarice are the three sparks that have set hearts aflame.'

Since Dante no doubt meant the lion to signify pride, and the wolf to signify envious greed, there is little reason to believe that he meant the *lonza*, or ounce, to signify envy—an interpretation in accord with the tradition as to the lynx. No tradition seems to support the theory that Dante meant a panther. And when we use these words it must continually be borne in mind that they are hardly more than mere words about which have clustered various legends. The classifications of modern naturalists have little or nothing to do with these ancient names and their parasitical fables. Any accurate determination of the animal meant by Dante seems next to impossible. Indeed, it is highly improbable that Dante or any ancient or medieval writer had a clear idea as to the various animals now called lynx, panther, and leopard. What Dante beheld was a spotted beast, very swift and light, which did not attack him, but simply kept before his eyes. Surely this creature is not Alexander making an

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* VI, 74-75.



onslaught upon India; nor is it, as one Italian asserts, a symbol of fraud, for Dante distinctly calls Geryon the 'foul image of fraud' (*quella sozza imagine di froda*, *Inf.* XVII, 7), nor would such an interpretation agree with any tradition.

Were it not for the cord which Dante took from his body, — the cord wherewith he had thought to catch the ounce with the painted skin, — and were it not that the wolf undoubtedly symbolises envious greed, envy would seem more acceptable than any other interpretation. But the cord suggests strongly the scriptural phrase of girding up the loins, and still more strongly the cord of the Franciscans. Though Dante himself may never have belonged even to the third order of the Cordeliers,<sup>1</sup> the girdle which he wore was part of their symbolical costume, served a practical purpose, and was the token of the chaste life they were sworn to lead, or of chastity in the larger sense, — continence, we may say, — for, according to an old and by no means foolish belief, the seat of the sensual, especially of sexual, passion is in the loins.<sup>2</sup> Dante says he once thought to take with his girdle the ounce with the spotted skin. The phrase seems to mean that he would have used the symbol of continence, not to allure to him a beast which caused him almost to turn back on life's road to avoid her, but rather to bind her, to make her, also, continent, or a captive of continency. Nevertheless, Dante by an oversight put Manto into the fourth bolgia of Hell and

<sup>1</sup> See BUTI, *Commento sopra la Divina Commedia*.

<sup>2</sup> BENVENUTO DA IMOLA, 'habebat cordam circa lumbos, ubi viget luxuria mulieris.'



also into Limbo, and by a like fallibility of his literary craft he may have neglected to make the allegory of the *lonza* logical. He has in any case mystified us and all his old-time readers by an obscurity which adds nothing to the beauty of the poem. Not only is it uncertain precisely when Dante thought to catch the ounce with the painted skin (for he made no endeavour to do so on encountering her near the gloomy wood), but one can hardly conceive why a simple cord should be an adequate means of bringing up the monster Geryon, unless this is merely a part of the heavenly plan for showing Dante through the mysterious places of Hell. As Virgil appeased Cerberus with a clod of earth, so he may have wrought this magic on the demon Geryon. What Dante meant is unlikely ever to be known.

When Dante encountered the ounce it was early morning, and, as he says, the hour of the day and the sweet season caused him to hope well concerning that beast with the pretty skin. In the sense of mystic theology noon would have been the 'noblest hour of all the day and the most virtuous' (*Conv.* IV, xxiii, 145-147), but physiologically and psychologically we may justly conceive that Dante's good sense would have indicated the morning hour as that in which man is least given to the lusts of the flesh, when he is most vigorous and eager for good works. And the sweet season of Easter would have beamed on him as if from heaven; for it was on Good Friday of the year 1300 that he encountered the ounce.<sup>1</sup> What other moment of all the year could so have strengthened his

<sup>1</sup> See EDW. MOORE, *Time References in the Divina Commedia* (Ital. translation, *Gli Accenni al Tempo*, pp. 10, 11).

hopes to conquer incontinence as such a day? Nor is it mere chance that Dante met the ounce before he met the lion and the wolf, for the *Divine Comedy* condenses the vicissitudes of life into a few days, and thus the three beasts seem to follow one another as youth is followed by manhood and manhood by old age. Neither envious greed nor overweening pride is the besetting sin of youth, but lust, lust for pleasures; for this is precisely one of the three great Dantesque categories of sin.

*Non ti rimembra di quelle parole,  
Colle quai la tua Etica pertratta  
Le tre disposizion che il ciel non vuole :  
Incontinenza, malizia e la matta  
Bestialitade ? e come incontinenza  
Men Dio offende e men biasimo accatta ?*<sup>1</sup>

Hast thou no recollection of those words  
With which thine Ethics thoroughly discusses  
The dispositions three, that Heaven abides not —  
Incontinence, and Malice, and insane  
Bestiality ? and how Incontinence  
Less God offendeth, and less blame attracts ?

— LONGFELLOW.

Each of the three beasts represents a demon of sin, and each sin thus embodied in an allegorical beast is more terrible than the preceding sin. Yet it would show small knowledge of humanity to imagine that Dante's classifications are exact. Indeed, nothing but the adulation engendered in small minds by Dante's greatness is responsible for trying to make all his plans of the other world, all his theories of life, biographies of indi-

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XI, 79-84.

viduals, allegories and schemes of sins, fit together like the parts of a mechanism. Dante's mind was not a divine organ, like that of a pope, but a man's mind; and nothing is less judicious than to interpret Dante with the premise that Dante could not err.

Dante not only changed the order of the three beasts in Jeremiah, but in two cases he changed their gender. The *lupus* becomes *la lupa*, the *pardus* becomes *la lonza*. So his demoniacal dogs are bitches, as in Virgil and Lucan. Dante's reason for choosing the bitch-wolf is obvious.<sup>1</sup> Though there existed a word *lonzo*, *lonza* was much the more usual form. But why did Dante employ *lonza* where *parda* would have done as well? Perhaps, as some one has suggested, perhaps he did so for the three *l*'s, — *una lonza leggiara, un leone, una lupa*. Seeing what a fancy medieval poets had for such embellishments, one can readily believe in the alliterative theory. Again, as will presently be shown, Dante was influenced in his choice by the classics.

What kind of a beast may Dante have meant by this ounce of his? Had the poet ever seen one? Benvenuto da Imola, a sound-minded man, sheds light here. 'I believe,' writes he, 'that the author means rather the pard than anything else, not only because the pard's qualities seem better to agree with lust, . . . but, also, because that Florentine word *lonza* seems to mean the pard more than some other wild beast. Wherefore, when once a certain pard was being carried through Florence, the children ran up, crying, "See the ounce!" and this was told me by that most bland Boccaccio of

<sup>1</sup> See chapter on 'The Wolf,' p. 114, note 3.

Certaldo.' (Unde dum semel portaretur quidam pardus per Florentiam, pueri concurrentes clamabant: vide lonciam, ut mihi narrabat suavissimus Boccatus de Certaldo.) Though the word *lonza* was applied by one writer, at least, to the hyena,<sup>1</sup> and by others to the lynx,<sup>2</sup> Dante lays stress on the spotted skin, which he calls 'lively' and 'painted.' The *pel maculato* of *Inf.* I, 33, is Virgil's<sup>3</sup> *maculosæ tegmine lyncis* (*Æn.* I, 327),<sup>4</sup> and the *pelle dipinta* of *Inf.* XVI, 108, answers closely to the following lines of Ovid; for it is well to remember that the acceptance of folklore clustering about a name and an artist's scattered borrowings of physical description are not the same, as is very often obvious in Dante. Here are the lines (*Met.* III, 668-669):—

*Quem circa tigres simulacraque inania lyncum  
Pictarumque iacent fera corpora pantherarum.*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Acta SS. Iunii*, p. 436, de S. Raynerio, 'In ipso deserto reperit duas hyænas, quas vulgus vocat lonzas, leone velociore et audaciores.' Cited by Du Cange. According to Philippe de Thaün (Walberg's ed., p. 45),

'Hyene signifie,  
Ne larai nel vus die,  
Ume aver, cuveitus,  
Ki est luxurius.'

<sup>2</sup> E. RAIMONDI (*Delle Caccie . . . Libri Quattro*), pp. 188, 190, 195. R. BELLEAU (ed. Marty-Laveaux), *Des Pierres Précieuses*, vol. II, p. 171:—

'Des onces mouchettez d'estoiles sur le dos  
Onces a l'œil subtil, au pié souple et dispos.'

*Ibid.* p. 239, 'Pierre d'once, ditte Lyncurium.' Cf. PLINY, XXVIII, 32, 'Peregrinæ sunt et lynces quæ clarissime omnium quadrupedum cernunt.'

<sup>3</sup> See note 1, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> But in Virgil it is not Venus who wears this skin.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. STATIUS, *Achill.* II, 406, 'imbelles lynces sectari,' with the behaviour of Dante's ounce. Cf. also HORACE, *Od.* II, xiii, 40, 'Aut timidos agitare lyncas.'



Except Emperor Frederick of Swabia, whose descriptions of birds are often extraordinarily accurate, medieval writers give what they imagined to be the habits of an animal, rather than its physical attributes. It is even safe to affirm that in the whole range of medieval zoölogy there is not one thoroughly scientific description of the looks of a dog or a horse, of a wild boar or a bear. The difficulty of identifying any variable exotic species is, therefore, almost insuperable. Yet we may be sure that leopards or similarly spotted beasts had come into Europe before 1229. Leopards and bears are mentioned as princely gifts in the *Roman de Brut*<sup>1</sup> of Wace,—a poem composed about 1155; and William of Malmesbury records<sup>2</sup> that Henry I of England longed fervently for the wonders from foreign lands,—leopards, lynxes, camels,—of which breeds England had none, and right joyfully, as he said, begged them of other kings. Frederick II of Swabia states in his *Art of Hawking* that in the chase hunters use instruments or animals as, for example, various leopards, lynxes male and female, ferrets, and some others.<sup>3</sup> By lynxes (*lincos et lincas*) he certainly did not mean the bobtailed creature with tufted ears, but some species of pard, as the Persian

<sup>1</sup> Vs. 10889 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *De gestis regum Angliæ* V (H. SAVILLE, *Rer. Anglic. script. Francof.* 1601), p. 161, 'Prona voluptate terrarum exterarum miracula inhiabat, leones, leopardos, lynces, camelos, quorum fœtus Anglia est inops, grandi, ut dixit iucunditate a regibus alienis expostulans.' Cited by ALWIN SCHULTZ in *Das Höfische Leben*, I, 452.

<sup>3</sup> *De Arte Venandi*, I, cap. 1, 'Aut habent animalia quadrupedia, domestica, agrestia, scilicet modos Leopardorum, Canum, Lincos, Lincas, Furectos, et alia plura.'



yuz or the cheetah. Frederick passed through Parma with leopards in 1229.<sup>1</sup> Probably not long before 1285 an ounce was shown in Florence.<sup>2</sup> On April 5, 1291, the Capitano del Popolo in the presence of the priors moved that fifty small florins be paid *pro Comuni Bindo de Luca* for a leopard. In June the Podestà had to do with the payment of sixty *soldi* and ten *denari* to Piero del Maestro for feeding the leopard.<sup>3</sup> From all these facts one may believe that Dante had seen a leopard, and that, in order to describe it, he used a word which other writers have applied, not only to the hyena, but also to the sharp-eyed lynx, whose nature is so envious that it hides from man its valuable lyngurium, or urinal stone. Etymologically *lynx* or *lince* and *lonza* are probably of one origin. That the word λύγξ or *lynx* was split by the learned into *lince* and by the others into *lonza* seems plain.

On Dante's *lonza*, or ounce, there has been written enough to fill a volume, not wholly a valuable volume ; for much that has been said is mere beating of bushes where the ounce never lay. Most critics have gone astray by failing to seek light in the animal lore of the Middle Ages.

<sup>1</sup> See chapter on 'The Elephant,' p. 202, note 4.

<sup>2</sup> T. CASINI, *Aneddoti e Studi Danteschi*, p. 53, cites the *Consulte della Repubblica Fiorentina* for 1285. This ounce had died or departed before June 29, 1285, when Raniero del Sasso made a proposition 'de curiis faciendis iuxta Palatium Potestatis, in loco in quo morabatur leuncia.'

<sup>3</sup> *Consulte della Rep. Fior.* II, pp. 20, 91. Cited by Torraca.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE LION

THE 'Physiologus' tells that the lion has three peculiarities. First, to throw the hunters off his track he rubs out his footmarks with his tail. This signifies the mystery of our Lord's becoming a man, a secret hidden from the heavenly powers and from the devil. Secondly, when the lion sleeps his eyes never close. Thus slept the body of Christ at the crucifixion, but his Godhood watched at the right hand of the Father. Thirdly, the lioness bears her cub dead, but on the third day his sire comes, breathes into his face, and thus brings him to life. This means our Lord's resurrection on the third day.<sup>1</sup>

Add now to these three attributes two more, and we shall know mainly what was thought about the lion in the Middle Ages. In the Bible and in the Fathers he figures in a good sense as the king,—the Lion of Judah,<sup>2</sup>—or typifies in stately fashion the might of Hell. It is chiefly<sup>3</sup> as a majestic beast, as an

<sup>1</sup> Cf. LAUCHERT, *Geschichte des Physiologus*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Epist.* V, i, 16–22. Cf. Genesis xlix, 9, 'Catulus leonis Iuda: ad praedam, fili mi, ascendisti: requiescens accubuisti ut leo, et quasi leaena, quis suscitabit eum?' Cf. the English version and Revel. v, 5. Cf. HUGO OF ST. VICTOR, *De Bestiis* II, cap. 1, 'Sic et Salvator noster, spiritualis Leo de tribu Iuda,' etc.

<sup>3</sup> Other references are as follows: (a) Astronomical: a sign of the Zodiac appropriate to Mars, *Parad.* XVI, 37; as representing

heraldic charge, as a name for Christ, or as a type of brutal, demoniacal might that the lion figures in Dante.

Dante must have seen a live lion before he began the *Divine Comedy*, for Pope Boniface had given one to the Commune of Florence, — a young lion, whose fate is thus chronicled by Giovanni Villani: 'While this lion was kept bound with a chain in the court of the Palace of the Priori, there came thither one day an ass laden with wood. Seeing the lion, the ass, either through

power, *Parad.* XXI, 14-15. (b) Greek and Roman mythology: Story of Athamas, *Inf.* XXX, 7-8. See TOYNBEE, *Dictionary*, s.v. 'Atamante.' Antaeus and his prey, *Inf.* XXXI, 118. Cf. LUCAN, *Phars.* IV, 601-602. Polinices dressed in lion's skin, *Conv.* IV, xxv, 63. See TOYNBEE, *Dictionary*, s.v. 'Adrasto.' A verse in Dante's first Eclogue (22), 'Placatique ruant campi de monte leones,' smacks of Ovid. Dante is fancying a golden age. (c) Heraldic: *Inf.* XXVII, 49, 51, Mainardo Pagano, a lioncel azure on a field argent. *Inf.* XVII, 58-60. According to Jacopo della Lana arms of Gianfigliuzzi were a lion azure on a field or. *Parad.* XII, 54, arms of Castile. According to Postillator Cassinensis (cited by Scartazzini) arms were as follows, 'Cuius signum scuti est ad quarteria; in duobus quarteriis supra in uno est castellum et in alio est leo; et sic etiam est in aliis duobus quarteriis inferioribus, nam leo superior subiugat castellum inferius, et castellum superius subiugat leonem inferiorem.' *Inf.* XXVII, 45, Ordelauffi arms. (d) Lions stricken with lockjaw for the benefit of Daniel (Daniel vi, 22), *De Mon.* III, i, 1-3: 'Conclusit ora leonum et non nocuerunt mihi; quia coram eo iustitia inventa est in me.' (e) In the probably spurious Penitential Psalm, Oxford Dante, p. 195, vs. 28-30: —

'E tanto è lo mio cor disconsolato,  
Ch' io gemo e ruggio, come fa il leone,  
Quando e' si sente preso, over legato.'

This is an 'original' insertion — highly original. (f) The lion figures also in the half-proverbial expression, 'ignoscendum est illi qui leonem in nubibus formidaret,' *De Mon.* III, iv, 75-76.

fear or miraculously, straightway assailed him so savagely and kicked him so hard that he killed him, and the help of many men there present was of no avail. This was held to be a harbinger of great changes, for many befell our city in those days. But certain scholars said that the prophecy of the Sibyl was fulfilled, wherein she said, "When the tame beast shall kill the king of the beasts, then shall the Church begin to fall asunder." Soon afterward this was made manifest in Pope Boniface.<sup>1</sup> Though Dante could hardly have failed to see so a rare curiosity as this lion, there is no evidence in his works that he got a fresh conception of the lion's nature.

As the Eagle of Polenta covers Cervia with its pinions,<sup>2</sup> so the lion in the arms of the Ordelaï holds Forlì beneath its green fore paws.<sup>3</sup> Thus a chance emblem of heraldry is made to figure the encroachments of a prince. If, now, the princely hunger for lands is joined to pride, the heraldic emblem becomes almost a reality, and the poet finds strong imagery for the devouring sin.

<sup>1</sup> *Cron.* VIII, 62. In 1260, according to Torraca, the Florentines kept a lion at public cost. Cf. Guittone's fourteenth letter to the Florentines. In the annals of Parma for May, 1299, we read, 'Item eodem tempore una leona donata fuit communi Parme, que postea alevata fuit in tenta pro communi quousque vixit.'

<sup>2</sup> See chapter on 'The Eagle,' p. 258.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXVII, 43-45:—

'La terra che fe' già la lunga prova,  
E de' Franceschi sanguinoso mucchio,  
Sotto le branche verdi si ritrova.'

The Ordelaï bore on their shield the upper half of a lion vert, *i.e.* a lion vert issuant. In LITTA, *Famiglie Celebri Italiane*, vol. IX, this lion is pink — 'sanguine' — on a field or.



Having strayed in a dusky wood, Dante encounters an ounce, yet hopes to overcome her with the help of the morning hour and the sweet season of Easter. Hardly is this danger past when he is confronted by a greater.

*Tempo era dal principio del mattino ;  
E il sol montava su con quelle stelle  
Ch' eran con lui, quando l' amor divino  
Mosse da prima quelle cose belle ;  
Sì che a bene sperar m' era cagione  
Di quella fera alla gaietta pelle,  
L' ora del tempo, e la dolce stagione :  
Ma non sì, che paura non mi desse  
La vista, che mi apparve, d' un leone.  
Questi pareva, che contra me venesse  
Con la test' alta<sup>1</sup> e con rabbiosa fame.<sup>2</sup>  
Sì che pareva che l' aer ne temesse.<sup>3</sup>*

'The time was at the beginning of the morning, and the Sun was mounting upward with those stars that were with him when Love Divine first set in motion those beautiful things; so that the hour of the time and the sweet season were occasion of good hope to me concerning that wild beast with the dappled skin. But not so that the sight which appeared to me of a lion did not give me fear. He seemed to be coming

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Parad.* IX, 50-51 : —

'Tal signoreggia e va con la testa alta,  
Che già per lui carpir si fa la ragna.'

<sup>2</sup> ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De Animal.* XXII, tract. ii, cap. I, says the lion does not assail men, 'nisi in magna fame quando alium non invenit cibum.' Cf. 1 Peter v, 8, 'Adversarius vester diabolus tanquam leo rugiens circuit, quaerens quem devoret.' Cf. *Epist.* VII, v, 98-99, and *De Mon.* III, iv, 73-76.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* I, 37-48.



against me, with head high and with ravening hunger, so that it seemed that the air was affrighted at him.'

— NORTON.

The onslaught of this lion is not true to life, but shows the king of beasts in a conventional attitude. He attacks his foe, not with furious bounds and with the head somewhat lowered, but he stalks toward him grandly, and the air seems to tremble. The lofty pose of the head betokens pride,<sup>1</sup> the pride of a man — some would have it of Philip the Fair; the ravenous hunger is hardly for flesh and blood, but rather for worldly power. No tradition could make this lion-demon signify anything but overweening pride and devouring might, whose hunger is appeased by wealth or, rather, by empire.<sup>2</sup> It is our 'adversary the devil, who, like a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour;' and he sins grandly — unlike the fox.<sup>3</sup>

The lion's stateliness, unnaturally portrayed by Dante in the lion that came toward him with ravenous hunger and his head high, is rightly described when the lion is in repose; and in such an attitude Dante may have observed the lion presented by Boniface to Florence. To the poet Sordello, whose spirit Dante met in Purgatory, are addressed these lines:

*O anima lombarda,  
Come ti stavi altera e disdegnosa,  
E nel mover degli occhi onesta e tarda!  
Ella non ci diceva alcuna cosa;*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Parad.* IX, 50–51.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Parad.* VI, 106–108.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXVII, 75. See chapter on 'The Fox,' p. 125 ff.

*Ma lasciavane gir, solo sguardando  
A guisa di leon quando si posa.*<sup>1</sup>

O proud Lombard soul !  
How thou didst wait, in thy disdain unstirred,  
And thy majestic eyes didst slowly roll !  
Meanwhile to us it never uttered word,  
But let us move, just giving us a glance,  
Like as a lion looks in his repose. — PARSONS.

Since our poet in all likelihood never saw Sordello, who was born sixty-five years earlier than Dante (and is not recorded after June 30, 1269, as alive), he could hardly have known whether Sordello or Sordello's shade would be lionlike in attitude ; but the description of a caged lion is so truthful as to set the reader wondering. Perhaps this Sordello is merely a statuesque recollection of the lion that was kept in the Palace of the Priori, and there kicked to death by the ass, who may not have known what a rare curiosity he was destroying.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* VI, 61-66. Cf. Genesis xlix, 9, cited on p. 103, note 2.

## CHAPTER X

### THE WOLF

THROUGHOUT the Middle Ages wolves abounded over all Europe.<sup>1</sup> Giovanni Villani tells of one that appeared in the heart of Florence, and Motta reports that as late as 1512 wolves infested the Lombard plain and killed people at the gates of Milan.<sup>2</sup> They swarmed in the English forests of Edward II,<sup>3</sup> and in France they prowled in straggling bands through the woods and on the plains, penetrating by night into the midst of towns, and in the early years of the fifteenth century roamed in mid-Paris.<sup>4</sup> Their enmity to shepherds and flocks was of course proverbial. Here is a sample, 'So extreme is the hatred between sheep and wolves, that musical strings made of the entrails of the wolf and of the sheep when struck together give out no sound.'<sup>5</sup>

In Dante the feud reappears, dressed sometimes in Dantesque language, sometimes in that of the Bible.

<sup>1</sup> 'Loup habonde[nt] en Itaille et en mainte autre terre.'—*Tresor*, p. 247.

<sup>2</sup> E. MOTTA, *Archivio st. lombardo*, 1891, XIII, p. 247, n. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 9th ed., s.v. 'Wolf.'

<sup>4</sup> ROSIÈRES, *Histoire de la Société Française au Moyen Age*, vol. II, pp. 425-426. Cited by Kuhns.

<sup>5</sup> ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De Animal.* XXII, tract. ii, cap. 1. Cf. commentary of F. Villani.

The shepherd lies by his flock at night, watchful lest  
some wild beast scatter it,

*Guardando perchè fiera non lo sperga,*<sup>1</sup>

and Florence, where Dante spent his childhood and youth, is the sheepfold wherein he slept as a lamb, hating the wolves that war upon it.<sup>2</sup> Giving his thought a Biblical turn, the poet characterises a greedy priesthood as ravening wolves in the dress of shepherds.<sup>3</sup> Dante dislikes dogs; but they are not so bad as wolves, for the poet thus describes the flow of Arno:—

It goes on falling, and the more it grows,  
The more it finds the dogs becoming wolves,  
This maledict and misadventurous ditch.<sup>4</sup>

—LONGFELLOW.

Yet the wolf and his cubs, weird phantoms, fall before  
the dogs that drive them to the mountain, and there kill

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XXVII, 84. Cf. *Parad.* IV, 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Parad.* XXV, 4-6.

<sup>3</sup> *Parad.* XXVII, 55-56:—

‘In vesta di pastor lupi rapaci  
Si veggion di quassù per tutti i paschi.’

Cf. *Parad.* IX, 132, and *Canz.* XVIII, 59-60:—

‘Eleggi omai, se la fraterna pace  
Fa più per te, o ‘l star lupa rapace.’

Cf. also Matt. vii, 15, ‘Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.’ Cf. *Tosco-Venez. Bestiarius*, p. 34, ‘Eziandio [come il lupo] sono tuti li meschini omeni che entrano in zerti ofizi eclesiastichi mondani propriamente per imbolare et per ranpinare quele cose che li condusero in pericolo di morte.’

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* XIV, 49-51.

them in the prophetic dream of Ugolino. Count Ugolino della Gherardesca tells how the Archbishop Ruggieri, the traitor, like a huntsman-in-chief and leader, hunted him and his sons to their death:—

*Questi pareva a me maestro e donno,  
Cacciando il lupo e i lupicini al monte,  
Per che i Pisan veder Lucca non ponno.  
Con cagne magre, studiose e conte,  
Gualandi con Sismondi e con Lanfranchi  
S' avea messi dinanzi dalla fronte.  
In picciol corso mi pareano stanchi  
Lo padre e i figli, e con l' acute scane  
Mi pareo lor veder fender li fianchi.<sup>1</sup>*

He in my vision lord and master seemed,  
Hunting the wolf and wolf-cubs on the height  
Which screeneth Lucca from the Pisan's eye ;  
With eager hounds well trained and lean and light,  
Gualandi and Lanfranchi darted by,  
With keen Sismondi ; these the foremost went,  
But after some brief chase, too hardly borne,  
The sire and offspring seemed entirely spent,  
And by sharp fangs their bleeding sides were torn.

— PARSONS.

In this dream the dogs are demons, but the wolves, phantoms though they be, are pursued like real marauding wolves, back to their fastnesses, and there are caught and slain.<sup>2</sup>

How, then, is Dante's attitude toward the wolf medi-

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXXIII, 28–36.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Le Roy Modus* (*feuillet*s XXXIX, XL), chapter entitled 'Cy devise comme on prent le leup a force de chiens sans filets.'



eval? How has he been influenced by the overreaching symbolism and folklore of his time? The wolf to Dante is the symbol of envious greed,—not of the Guelphs alone,<sup>1</sup> but of many, and mostly, perhaps, of the clergy and of his own Florence.<sup>2</sup> Pluto, the demon of wealth, is to him a ‘cursed wolf,’<sup>3</sup> and the Arno flows by the ‘wolves’ of Florence. Again, having come to a cornice of Purgatory assigned to the covetous, our poet bursts out furiously against the ‘ancient wolf,’—a she-wolf here, as was the one that hindered and drove him back at the mouth of Hell:—

*Maledetta sie tu, antica lupa,  
Che più che tutte l' altre bestie hai preda,  
Per la tua fame senza fine cupa !<sup>4</sup>*

Accursed be thou, wolf of ancient brood,  
That hast more prey than any beast beside !  
Having a greed so infinite for food.

—PARSONS.

And this food, for which the bitch-wolf is greedy, is *terra e peltro*,—land and pelf.<sup>5</sup>

Having strayed from the straight road that led to the

<sup>1</sup> That Dante's contemporaries ever thought of a connexion between *wulf* or *wolf* and *Guelfo* has not been proved. *Guelfo* is from ‘Welf,’ a family name.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Parad.* IX, 127–132; *Purg.* XIV, 50; and *Inf.* VI, 74.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* VII, 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* XX, 10–12.

<sup>5</sup> PLINY, X, 93, ‘Lupi ut diximus [vivunt] et terra in fame.’ Cf. ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *op. cit.* XXII, ii, 1, ‘Famelici aliquando terra satiantur’; SOLINUS, *Polyhist.* II, 36; BRUNETTO LATINI, *Tresor*, pp. 247–248, ‘And the shepherds say that he lives sometimes on prey, sometimes on earth, and sometimes on wind.’

fair mountain of hope, Dante found himself in a gloomy wood, near which he encountered an ounce with a spotted skin, a lion, and a gaunt she-wolf.

*Ed una lupa che di tutte brame  
Semiava carca nella sua magrezza,<sup>1</sup>  
E molte genti fe' già viver grame.  
Questa mi porse tanto di gravezza  
Con la paura, che uscìa di sua vista,<sup>2</sup>  
Ch' io perdei la speranza dell' altezza.  
E quale è quei che volentieri acquista,  
E giugne il tempo che perder lo face,  
Che in tutti i suoi pensier piange e s' attrista:  
Tal mi fece la bestia senza pace,  
Che venendomi incontro, a poco a poco  
Mi ripingeva là dove il Sol tace.<sup>3</sup>*

And a she-wolf that with all hungerings  
Seemed to be laden in her meagreness,  
And many folk has caused to live forlorn !  
She brought upon me so much heaviness,  
With the affright that from her aspect came,  
That I the hope relinquished of the height,  
And as he is who willingly acquires,  
And the time comes that causes him to lose,  
Who weeps in all his thoughts and is despondent,  
E'en such made me that beast withouten peace,  
Which coming on against me by degrees  
Thrust me back thither where the sun is silent.

— LONGFELLOW.

<sup>1</sup> ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *loc. cit.*, 'Lupus vorat carnes potiusquam comedat et non impinguatur.'

<sup>2</sup> 'Con la paura, che uscìa di sua vista.' Here we may have in a modified form the story of the wolf which, by seeing a man first, makes him dumb. See *Tresor*, p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* I, 49-60.

Now the shade of Virgil appears, and Dante appeals to him for rescue:—

*Tu se' lo mio maestro e il mio autore :  
 Tu se' solo colui, da cui io tolsi  
 Lo bello stile che m' ha fatto onore.  
 Vedi la bestia, per cui io mi volsi ;  
 Aiutami da lei, famoso saggio,  
 Ch' ella mi fa tremar le vene e i polsi.  
 ' A te convien tenere altro viaggio,'  
 Rispose, poi che lagrimar mi vide,  
 ' Se vuoi campar d' este loco selvaggio :  
 Chè questa bestia, per la qual tu gride,  
 Non lascia altrui passar per la sua via,  
 Ma tanto lo impedisce che l' uccide :<sup>1</sup>  
 Ed ha natura sì malvaggia e ria,  
 Che mai non empie la bramosa voglia,  
 E dopo il pasto ha più fame che pria.<sup>2</sup>  
 Molti son gli animali a cui s' ammoglia,<sup>3</sup>  
 E più saranno ancora, infin che il veltro  
 Verrà, che la farà morir con doglia.*

<sup>1</sup> *Wisdom*, ii, 24, 'Through envy of the devil came death into the world.' Cf. *Inf.* I, 111, 'Là onde invidia prima dipartilla.'

<sup>2</sup> Cf. HORACE, *Od.* III, xvi, 17:—

'Crescentem sequitur cura pecuniam  
 Maiorumque fames.'

And OVID, *Met.* VIII, 823-825 (ed. Riese):—

'Quodque urbibus esse  
 Quodque satis poterat populo, non sufficit uni;  
 Plusque cupit quo plura demittat in alvum.'

<sup>3</sup> For the story here indicated see, e.g., BRUNETTO LATINI, *Tre-sor*, pp. 247-248. The bad faith of Siena, her 'trimming,' passed into this proverb, current throughout Tuscany, 'La lupa puttane-gia' (The bitch-wolf is wantoning). See DINO COMPAGNI, *Cronaca Fior.* II, *ad fin.* Cf. also Dante's statement in *Epist.* VIII, vii, 1-2: 'Quidni? Cupiditatem unusquisque sibi duxit in uxorem,' etc.

*Questi non ciberà terra nè peltro,  
Ma sapienza e amore e virtute,  
E sua nazione sarà tra Feltro e Feltro.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Questi la caccerà per ogni villa,  
Fin che l' avrà rimessa nello inferno,  
Là onde invidia<sup>1</sup> prima dipartilla.'*<sup>2</sup>

'Thou art my master, and my author thou,  
Thou art alone the one from whom I took  
The beautiful style that has done honour to me.  
Behold the beast, for which I have turned back ;  
Do thou protect me from her, famous Sage,  
For she doth make my veins and pulses tremble.'  
'Thee it behooves to take another road,'  
Responded he, when he beheld me weeping,  
'If from this savage place thou wouldst escape ;  
Because this beast, at which thou criest out,  
Suffers not any one to pass her way,  
But so doth harass him that she destroys him ;  
And has a nature so malign and ruthless,  
That never doth she glut her greedy will,  
And after food is hungrier than before.  
Many the animals with whom she weds,  
And more they shall be still, until the Greyhound  
Comes, who shall make her perish in her pain.'  
He shall not feed on either earth or pelf,  
But upon wisdom, and on love and virtue ;  
Twixt Feltro and Feltro shall his nation be ;

\* \* \* \* \*

Through every city shall he hunt her down,  
Until he shall have driven her back to Hell,  
There from whence envy did first let her loose.'

— LONGFELLOW.

<sup>1</sup> See note I, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* I, 85-105 and 109-111.

Thus Nature's palpable truth is distorted in a dozen ways by folklore and allegory. But how magnificently! For this wolf is of the kind that rove in nightmares, a ghostly creature looming on some dark road, in a forest haunted by other uncouth things, for life is weirdly caricatured in dreams. Dante's she-wolf is a demon. She has lived for untold ages—ever since sin came into the world, but symbolises envious greed. Avarice makes men stammering or dumb, and the wolf is the symbol of avarice. Now Dante's siren stammers,—so Benvenuto explains,<sup>1</sup> because she is covetous,—and, according to folklore, if a wolf sees a man before the man sees it the man is made dumb. Yet a close connexion between the legend and Dante's words—*la paura che uscia di sua vista* (the fear that came from the sight of her)—is hard to discern.

Though a real wolf, if alone, almost never attacks a man, and, if it attack him, flies upon him or runs him down, this she-wolf of his dream drives our poet back, little by little, to the forest, and makes his veins and pulses tremble. She is gluttonous, but never cloyed. Like the wolf of folklore she feeds on earth or land,<sup>2</sup> but will at last be driven back to Hell by the magic hound that shall eat neither land nor pelf: and as the she-wolf of folklore is said to be followed in her heat by many other wolves, so this dream-wolf of Dante is wedded to many animals; but when the great hound appears,—the hound that feeds on wisdom and love and

<sup>1</sup> On *Purg.* XIX, 7, 'Una femmina balba—hoc respicit avaritiam, quae non loquitur clare et aperte.

<sup>2</sup> See note 2, page 95.



virtue, — he shall drive her back to Hell, whence Satan's envy long ago sent her out into the world. This she-wolf, then, is only the embodiment of a sin, only another form of the devil.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE. — An unimportant reference to the wolf occurs in *Conv.* I, vi, 45.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE DOG

DANTE, like our own Shakespeare, had small fondness for dogs. The great intelligence they often possess,



A VELTRO OR BOAR  
HOUND

From a medieval MS.  
After Viollet-le-Duc

their loyalty even to a bad master, their obvious delight in kindness, their gratitude, their histrionic qualities, their wistful interest in human affairs, — not one of these good qualities appealed to Dante. He makes a saviour of Italy out of the *veltro*,<sup>1</sup> the lordly hound, whose virtue is swiftness,<sup>2</sup> and who shall drive back to Hell the rapacious wolf;<sup>3</sup> but this hound is unnatured by excessive allegory.

<sup>1</sup> The allegory of the *veltro* scarcely concerns this essay, which is rather a study of nature. The *veltro* was a heavily built dog, probably between our great Danes and the greyhound. Without doubt the *veltro* and *veautres* are the same dog. They were strong enough to kill bears and wild boars. 'L'autre nature d'alanz veautres si sont taillez comme laide taille de levrier, mais ils ont grosses testes, grosses levres et granz oreilles, et de ceux s'aide l'en tres bien a chascier les ours et les porc.' — GASTON FÉBUS, Richel 616, f° 46<sup>b</sup>, cited by Godefroy. Cf. also LÉON GAUTIER, *La Chevalerie*, pp. 182–183. *Parténopeus de Blois* (533): —

' Muetes de chiens i fait mener  
Et veautres por prendre sainglier.'

See also VIOLETT-LE-DUC, *Dict. du mobilier français*, vol. II, p. 426. See also DU CANGE, *s.v.* 'Canis.'

<sup>2</sup> *Conv.* I, xii, 60–62, 65–67. <sup>3</sup> See chapter on 'The Wolf,' p. 112 ff.

Dante describes only the superficial traits, — the dog's barking and mournful howl,<sup>1</sup> his gluttony, the snarling pugnacity of curs, the mastiff's ferocity, the boar hound's fleetness, the bird-dog's sense of smell.<sup>2</sup> Dante understood dogs so little as to attribute to them the metaphysical perturbation of a scholastic philosopher.

Between two viands, equally removed  
And tempting, a free man would die of hunger  
Ere either he could bring unto his teeth.  
So would a lamb between the ravens  
Of two fierce wolves stand, fearing both alike ;  
And so would stand a dog between two does.<sup>3</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

This is no real dog but a schoolman, a Thomas Aquinas,<sup>4</sup> splitting hairs for sheer love of mankind.

In the Middle Ages there were no systematic scavengers, no police. Table leavings and filth were not seldom cast out of windows to be washed away by the rain, dried up by the sun, or devoured by the dogs, which were the main scavengers in Dante's Florence, as they are now in Stamboul. If a man was rich and owned a goodly house

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* VI, 74, 'Bruto con Cassio nello inferno latrà.' *Inf.* XXX, 16-21 : —

' Ecuba trista misera e cattiva,  
Poscia che vide Polissena morta,  
E del suo Polidoro in sulla riva  
Del mar si fu la dolorosa accorta,  
Forsennata latrò sì come cane ;  
Tanto il dolor le fe' la mente torta.'

Cf. OVID, *Met.* XIII, 404-407, 538-540, 567-571. The Ovidian figure is repeated in *Inf.* XXXII, 103-108 ; VII, 25-27, 43 ; *Canz.* XII, 59. <sup>2</sup> *Conv.* I, xii, 60-62, 65-67. <sup>3</sup> *Parad.* IV, 1-6.

<sup>4</sup> See commentaries of Scartazzini and H. F. Tozer on *Parad.* IV, 1.

and treasure, he kept dogs,<sup>1</sup> more watchful than mere hirelings. No doubt, then, Dante was many a time awakened by these prowlers seeking a meal in the streets, or watched their quarrelsome struggle for existence. When these creatures have a master whose property they try to guard, Dante sees in the action only the ferocity. Devils fly upon their victim

With equal fury and such a storm of wrath  
As when dogs fly some poor man to attack  
Who stops and begs for alms upon his path.

— After PARSONS.

*Con quel furor e con quella tempesta  
Ch' escon i cani addosso al poverello,  
Che di subito chiede ove s' arresta.*<sup>2</sup>

What do these words reveal? Can it be that Dante was embittered against these guardians by some personal recollection? He himself tells us how in exile he went to nearly every part of Italy, almost in beggary, showing against his will the wounds of ill fortune, afflicted by grievous poverty, and seeming worthless in the eyes of many who had thought of him in another way.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps these dogs, suspicious as dogs are of ill-

<sup>1</sup> 'Et si doit li sires avoir granz mastins, por garder ses bestes, et petitiz chiennez por garder sa maison, et levriers et brachez et oisiax por vener, quant il se vuelt en ce solacier.'—BRUNETTO LATINI, *Tresor*, p. 180. Penalties were inflicted on whoever stole or killed a watch-dog or hunting-dog. Cf. DU CANGE, *s.v.* 'Canis.'

RABANUS MAURUS, *De Univ.* VIII, c. 1, 'The dog, a most voracious and bothersome animal, is wont to guard with his barking those houses in which he knows he can satisfy his gluttony with a morsel of bread.'

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XXI, 67-69.

<sup>3</sup> *Conv.* I, iii, 20-40.



Qual è quel cane che abbaiando agugna,  
E si racqueta poi che il pasto morde,  
Che solo a divorarlo intende e pugna. . . .

*Inferno*, VI, 28–30.

From a fourteenth century MS. After Zambrini





clad strangers, had once attacked even Dante. Or, again, the poet may have borne in mind some other assault upon a begging vagabond; for to be a beggar was no such dishonour then as now.

Not only is the dog fierce against beggars, but he flies 'cruelly' after the hare,<sup>1</sup> and the Malatestas are the Old and the New mastiff of Verruchio.<sup>2</sup> From a phrase of Dante's it seems that mastiffs were employed to run down thieves in those days. A devil flings a sinner down into the pitch:—

*Laggiù il buttò, e per lo scoglio duro  
Si volse, e mai non fu mastino sciolto  
Con tanta fretta a seguitar lo furo.*<sup>3</sup>

Hurling him down, back o'er the hard rock  
He sped, and never was mastiff loosed  
With such haste to chase a thief.

Yet the dog may be himself the victim, for the struggle to exist causes every creature to torture or kill, or to

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXIII, 16-18.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XXVII, 46-48:—

'Il mastin vecchio, e il nuovo da Verrucchio,  
Che fecer di Montagna il mal governo,  
Là dove soglion, fan de' denti succhio.'

Scartazzini fails to offer any evidence that the Malatestas had a mastiff on their shield. WOODWARD, *Heraldry Brit. and Foreign*, vol. I, p. 243, gives their arms thus, 'An elephant's head, the trunk elevated sable, tusked argent, . . . it issues from a coronet and has a golden crest *échancré* running down its back from its forehead.' Benvenuto sees no heraldic allusion, '. . . quorum utrumque appellat Mastinum metaphorice, quasi velit dicere, ambo magni magistri tyrannidis. Mastinus est fortis, violentus et rapax qui non de facili dimittit predam, quam assannat.'

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXI, 43-45.

be tortured or killed by some other thing. To what does Dante liken the busy hands of the damned who are forever striking off the flakes of fire?

*Per gli occhi fuori scoppiava lor duolo :  
Di qua, di là soccorrien con le mani,  
Quando a' vapori, e quando al caldo suolo.  
Non altrimenti fan di state i cani,  
Or col ceffo or coi piè, quando son morsi  
O da pulci o da mosche o da tafani.<sup>1</sup>*

Oh, how their eyes their agonies betrayed !  
Ever by turns against the fiery sleet  
And the hot sand, their swift hands they employed,  
As dogs in summer ply both jaws and feet,  
By flies or hornets or by fleas annoyed.

— PARSONS.

Dante has little sympathy for these sinners ; for the suffering dogs he expresses none. Dogs to Dante's mind were little better than wolves. The people of Arezzo<sup>2</sup> are snarling curs who dwell on the Arno.

*Botoli<sup>3</sup> trova poi, venendo giuso  
Ringhiosi più che non chiede lor possa,  
Ed a lor, disdegnosa, torce il muso.<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XVII, 46-51.

<sup>2</sup> According to Anonimo Fiorentino, the Aretines had cut on their totem, 'A cane non magno saepe tenetur aper.'

<sup>3</sup> This word is probably not akin to Old French *baultz*, but may be built on the Germanic stem *but*, *bot*, 'stumpy.' Here Dante seems to mean 'curs.' The word *botolo* also meant a special breed. Cf. FRANCESCO SACCHETTI, nov. 108, 'Avea il detto messer Guglielmo un catello quasi tra botolo e brachetto,' etc. ; also BOCCACCIO, g. 7, f. 2, 'E se non fosse ch' io non voglio mostrare d' essere schiatta di can botolo,' etc.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* XIV, 46-48.

Then, downward flowing, it finds curs  
 Snarling more than their strength demands,  
 And scornful its muzzle turns away.

If these 'snarling curs' find their way to Hell, their snarling will become a 'bark' or 'howl,'<sup>1</sup> and Virgil, thrusting Filippo Argenti off into the mire, cries, 'Back there with the other dogs!'<sup>2</sup> Ugolino, gnawing the skull of the Archbishop, put to it teeth as strong as a dog's.

'But what grief could not do hunger did then.'  
 This said, he rolled his eyes askance, and fell  
 To gnaw the skull with greedy teeth again,  
 Strong as a dog's upon the bony shell.<sup>3</sup>

— PARSONS.

Not only do the teeth grind powerfully on Ruggieri's skull,—teeth that must grind for eternity,—but the whole action, the upward glance, the return to the skull, the rolling of the eyes, and the concentration of Count Ugolino's spirit on the horrible bone are all the actions of a dog rather than of a man. Ugolino gnaws and starves forever. Not so the demon Cerberus, who is appeased with a fistful of earth, as a dog is satisfied and stops barking when once he gets his food.<sup>4</sup>

As bays a greedy dog with fierce desire,  
 But quiet grows, mumbling the snatched repast  
 For which alone his hunger fights and strains.

— PARSONS.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 119, note 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* VIII, 42.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXXIII, 75-78.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* VI, 28-30. See chapter on 'Cerberus,' p. 47 ff.

Not only does Dante give to two of his fiends the nicknames Dog-face<sup>1</sup> and Dog-grabber<sup>2</sup> (for both the devils and the damned are curs), but follows a tradition by actually putting dogs into Hell to pursue and rend the lost souls. Lucan<sup>3</sup> speaks of the 'Stygian bitches,' and in Tundal's<sup>4</sup> Vision the Angel says to the Soul, 'Look now, for the mad dogs are waiting to torture thee.' In the wood of the Suicides Dante's ears were struck by a crash of some approaching chase:—

*Ed ecco duo dalla sinistra costa,  
Nudi e graffiati, fuggendo sì forte,  
Che della selva rompièno ogni rosta.  
Quel dinanzi: 'Ora accorri, accorri, morte.'  
E l' altro, a cui pareva tardar troppo,  
Gridava: 'Lano, sì non furo accorte  
Le gambe tue alle giostre del Toppo.'  
E poichè forse gli fallia la lena,  
Di sè e d' un cespuglio fece un groppo.  
Dietro a loro era la selva piena  
Di nere cagne, bramose e correnti,  
Come veltri che uscisser di catena.  
In quel, che s' appiattò, miser li denti,  
E quel dilaceraro a brano a brano;  
Poi sen portar quelle membra dolenti.<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Cagnazzo, *Inf.* XXI, 119.

<sup>2</sup> Graffiacane, *Inf.* XXI, 122.

<sup>3</sup> Cited by Boccaccio:—

'Iam vos ego numine vero  
Eliciam, stygiasque canes in luce superna  
Destituam.'

Cf. VIRGIL, *Æn.* VI, 255–258. Conington says the feminine is more usual of infernal hounds.

<sup>4</sup> In *Scelta di Curios. Lett.*, vol. 128, p. 44.

<sup>5</sup> *Inf.* XIII, 115–129.



Thus, at a sudden sound we stood aghast ;  
 As lo ! two wretches from the left there drove,  
 Shattering the impeding branches as they passed,  
 Bleeding and scratched and naked, through the grove.  
 'Death !' cried the foremost, 'to the rescue ! fly !'  
 The other, vexed that he less fleetly went,  
 Cried, 'Lano ! not so swiftly didst thou ply  
 Those legs of thine at Toppo's tournament.'  
 Then, as if wanting wind, he stopped, and formed  
 A single group there with a stunted plant ;  
 While close behind them all the forest swarmed  
 With grim black bitches, following fierce and gaunt —  
 Like greyhounds rushing from the leash they darted,  
 And fastening on the wretch who lurking lay,  
 Piecemeal his limbs with greedy fangs they parted,  
 And bore the quivering fragments far away.

— PARSONS.

A black dog frightened the witches at Salem in 1691 ;  
 and a black dog in Goethe's *Faust* is only the prowler  
 Mephistopheles.

*Faust.* Siehst du den schwarzen Hund durch Saat und Stop-  
 pel streifen ?

*Wagner.* Ich sah ihn lange schon, nicht wichtig schien er mir.

*Faust.* Betracht' ihn recht. Für was hältst du das Thier ?

*Wagner.* Für einen Pudel, der auf seine Weise  
 Sich auf der Spur des Herren plagt.

*Faust.* Bemerkst du, wie in weitem Schneckenkreise  
 Er um uns her und immer näher jagt ?  
 Und irr' ich nicht, so zieht ein Feuerstrudel  
 Auf seinem Pfaden hinterdrein.

— *Faust*, I, vss. 1147-1155.

Since hell, after all, is no more nor less than the  
 awfulest nightmare of mankind, these black bitches

that pursue Lano differ in no wise from those that Count Ugolino saw in his dream, — those lean, eager bitches that followed the wolf and his cubs to the mountain of San Giuliano.<sup>1</sup> And, as they overtake the werewolf Ugolino, so the *veltro*, the magic hound, shall drive the gaunt she-wolf back into hell.

On many tombs of the Middle Ages are to be seen the lord and his lady graven in marble above their handful of dust, and at their feet is often stretched a hound. As he shares their aristocratic tomb, so in life he lay at their feet and shared their castle. He is thus almost an emblem of the prince; and, if the prince be just, how could the swiftness of his stroke for justice be signified better than in his hound, who becomes himself an avenging Messiah, full of wisdom, love, and virtue? The hound is now by dualistic allegory transformed into a man, or, rather, into a spirit of Good, powerful enough to drive envious Greed out of all Italy.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXXIII, 31–36. See chapter on ‘The Wolf,’ p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* I, 100–111.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE FOX

*Se vedi volpe correre,  
Non dimandar la traccia.*

— JACOPONE DA TODI.

THAT shrewd and pretty little creature, the fox, from antiquity down through the Middle Ages was an object of fear and pious scorn. He is the wiliest, the most fraudulent, of all the beasts. He is the foe, not only of laymen, but of clerics and friars, of popes and saints. He is the symbol of heresy,<sup>1</sup> the embodiment of the Devil.<sup>2</sup>

Not only has the fox all these characteristics, he is also the arch foe of other beasts, and a whole epic<sup>3</sup> is written to tell how by countless wiles he hoodwinks Bernard the Ass, outwits Noble the Lion, blots the honour of Bruin the Bear, and escapes the gibbet after a life of malice and shame.<sup>4</sup> His intelligence, like that of the Fiend, is

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine in Ps. lxxx, cited by Scartazzini. Rabanus Maurus (*De Univ.* lib. VIII, cap. 1) declares that 'the fox signifies mystically the wily devil, or the sly heretic, or a sinner, and elsewhere, saith St. Matthew (viii), "the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests," signifying in the foxes heretics, and in the birds of the air evil spirits,' etc. The opinion is perhaps borrowed from St. Ambrose (*Expos. in Lucam*, lib. VII).

<sup>2</sup> HUGO OF ST. VICTOR, *De Bestiis*, II, 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Le Roman de Renard*. In Flemish, *Reinaert de Vos*, later embodied in Goethe's poem.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. GASTON PARIS, *Littérature française au moyen âge*, §§ 82-84.

bent only on wickedness. 'The tricky fox,' declares Alexander Neckam,<sup>1</sup> 'is armed with frauds inborn. Even having been caught, he resorts to exquisite wiles. With so great versatility is he endowed as to seem sometimes to elude the mind of man.' And Hugo of St. Victor avers that the fox is called *vulpes* because he is *volupes* (slippery). 'For he is slippery-footed, and never follows a straight road, but runs crookedly here and there. Fraudulent and sly, he gives his image to the Devil.'<sup>2</sup>

St. Augustine sees in him one who signifies tricksters, and especially heretics full of guile.<sup>3</sup> Dante indicts him, too, and vents upon him his wrath at the contemptible wickedness of certain men. In one of those wholesale condemnations of which he alone is capable, the poet describes how the Arno, having passed the curs of Arezzo and the wolves of Florence, flows (accursed and unhappy ditch!) by the Pisan foxes, worst of all:—

*Vassi cadendo, e quanto ella più ingrossa,  
Tanto più trova di can farsi lupi  
La maladetta e sventurata fossa.  
Discesa poi per più pelaghi cupi,  
Trova le volpi sì piene di froda,  
Che non temono ingegno che le occupi.*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wright's ed., p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* XIV, 49-54. Though I have used Longfellow's translation for lack of a better, it seems to me that the word *ingegno* = here old French *engin*, English 'gin,' and that *occupi* means 'to catch.' Cf. Petrarch (*Tratt. ben. viv.* 9), 'Sono ingegni del diavolo,' etc. Boccaccio (*nov.* 98, 36), 'Non dimeno dovete sapere che io non cercai nè con ingegno nè con fraude d' imporre alcuna macula all' onestà ed alla chiarezza del vostro sangue.' For *occupare*, 'to

It goes on falling, and the more it grows,  
 The more it finds the dogs becoming wolves,  
 This maledict and misadventurous ditch.  
 Descended then through many a hollow gulf,  
 It finds the foxes so replete with fraud  
 They fear no cunning that may master them.

— LONGFELLOW.

And into the mouth of Guido da Montefeltro, who had taught the papal trickster, Boniface, how to be still trickier, Dante puts these words (Guido speaks in Hell):<sup>1</sup>—

*Io fui uom d' arme, e poi fui cordelliero,  
 Credendomi, sì cinto, fare ammenda;  
 E certo il creder mio veniva intero,  
 Se non fosse il gran Prete, a cui mal prenda,  
 Che mi rimise nelle prime colpe;  
 E come e quare voglio che m' intenda.  
 Mentre ch' io forma fui d'ossa e di polpe,  
 Che la madre mi diè, l' opere mie  
 Non furon leonine ma di volpe.<sup>2</sup>  
 Gli accorgimenti e le coperte vie  
 Io seppi tutte, e sì menai lor arte  
 Ch' al fine della terra il suono uscie.*

I was a soldier, then a corded friar;  
 So girdled, thinking meet amends to make;

catch,' cf. Boccaccio (*nov.* 27, 19), 'Quale col giacchio il pescatore nel fiume molti pesci ad un tratto,' etc. It seems to me the line,—

'Che non temono ingegno che le occupi'—

either was meant to have a twofold significance, or should be translated,—

Which fear not that any gin may catch them.

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXVII, 67–78.

<sup>2</sup> CICERO, *De Officiis*, I, 13, 41, 'fraus quasi vulpeculae, vis leonis videtur.'



And surely this had proved no vain desire  
 But for the High Priest, whom curses take !  
 'Twas he seduced me to my sins once more,  
 Hear how and why ; the hearing it is worth.  
 While I my bones and pulpy members wore  
 Which my good mother gave me at my birth,  
 Mine was the fox's, not the lion's part :  
 I knew all tricks, all covert ways of fraud,  
 And with such cunning carried out their art  
 To the world's end my fame was noised abroad.

— PARSONS.

Not only is the fox thus skilfully made the bearer of human sin, but, when he assumes a demoniacal form, the symbol of that heresy which assailed the early Church, the character of the beast is lost, and nothing is left but a demon who flings himself upon the Triumphal Car of the Church and is straightway put to flight by Beatrice, the figure of Theology.

*Poscia vidi avventarsi nella cuna  
 Del trionfal veicolo una volpe,  
 Che d' ogni pasto buon pareva digiuna.  
 Ma, riprendendo lei di laide colpe,  
 La Donna mia la volse in tanta futa  
 Quanto sofferson l' ossa senza polpe.<sup>1</sup>*

Thereafter saw I leap into the body  
 Of the triumphal vehicle a fox  
 That seemed unfed with any wholesome food.  
 But, for his sins upbraiding him,  
 My Lady put him to as swift a flight  
 As such a fleshless skeleton could bear.

— LONGFELLOW.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XXXII, 118-123.

Again, in a Latin letter addressed to Henry VII of Luxemburg,<sup>1</sup> Dante lashes Florence by calling her a stinking vixen:—

‘Do you not know, perchance, most excellent of princes! (nor can you see from the height of such majesty), where this stinking fox lies, safe from the hunters?’<sup>2</sup> This is the classic epithet for heresy.<sup>3</sup> If the heresy be only political, it matters not. Baffled to find a human figure, the poet vents his anger at his erstwhile fellows with an epithet dear to the theologians, and drawn from the animal kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> *Epist.* VII, 135–138, ‘An ignoras, excellentissime principum, nec de specula summæ celsitudinis deprehendis, ubi vulpecula fœtoris istius, venantium segura, decumbat?’ (For the word ‘vulpecula,’ cf. p. 129, note 2.) In French venery there were five ‘stinking beasts’—the wild boar, the wild sow, the wolf, the fox, and the otter. King Modus has a chapter on these ‘cinq bestes puans.’

<sup>2</sup> Translated by C. S. Latham.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. CASSIODORUS, *Hist. Eccl.* V, 47, ‘Fœtorem hæreticæ pestis evomuit.’

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE PANTHER

IN Aristotle,<sup>1</sup> in Pliny,<sup>2</sup> and, more important still, in that mystical bestiary whose unknown author is called the Physiologus,<sup>3</sup> it is told that the panther has so sweet a breath as to entice all other animals to follow her except, some say, the dragon. Guido delle Colonne and Messer Polo celebrate the modesty of their mistresses, who are as unconscious of their sweetness and beauty as the panther.<sup>4</sup> St. Hildebert liked the story, which found its way into the *Bestiary of Love* by Richard Fournival,<sup>5</sup> and figures prominently in a poem called *The Tale of the Love Panther*.<sup>6</sup> In an Anglo-Saxon poem

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Animal.* IX, 6. (Aristotle explains that the panther uses her sweet breath in order to entice other animals where she may devour them.)

<sup>2</sup> VIII, 62. In XXI, 39, having spoken of the sweet odour of flowers, Pliny says, 'Animalium nullum odoratum, nisi si de pantheris quod dictum est credimus.' See LAUCHERT, *Geschichte des Physiologus*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> The *Physiologus* was diffused through Europe earlier than Aristotle.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. LAUCHERT, *op. cit.* p. 189.

<sup>5</sup> *Le Bestiaire d'Amour, par Richard de Fournival*, p. p. C. Hippeau, Paris, 1860, p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> *Le Dit de la Panthère d'Amours par Nicole de Margival, poème du XIII siècle, publié d'après des manuscrits de Paris et de Saint Pétersbourg*, par HENRY A. TODD (in Société des Anciens Textes), Paris, 1883. See especially chap. III, of Introduction, pp. xvi-xxiii.

the panther symbolises Christ,<sup>1</sup> as does the griffin in Dante.

It is in all likelihood to this legend of the sweet odour that Dante refers in his treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia*.<sup>2</sup> Searching for what he calls the illustrious folk-speech, Dante writes as follows, 'Having hunted through the groves and meadows of Italy without coming upon the panther we are following, in order to find her let us set out on her track more reasonably, that we may by skilful zeal entangle her in our snares, for she is fragrant (*redolentem*) and shows herself everywhere.'

Thus our author seems<sup>3</sup> to accept a legend so well known throughout the Middle Ages as to render easier the identification of the 'ounce' encountered by Dante near the gloomy wood at the mouth of Hell.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See TEN BRINK, *Hist. of English Literature*, pp. 62-63 (2d German ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *De V. E.* I, xvi, 1-7, 'Postquam venati saltus et pascua sumus Italiae, nec panteram quam sequimur adinvenimus; ut ipsam reperire possimus, rationabilius investigemus de illa, ut solerti studio redolentem ubique et ubique apparentem nostris penitus irretiamus tendiculis.'

<sup>3</sup> Dante uses the word *redolere* (without warrant that I have been able to find) again in *De V. E.* I, xvi, 49 and 54, but keeps up the metaphor in 45 and 47.

<sup>4</sup> See chapter on 'The Ounce,' p. 88 ff.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE SHE-CAT — LA GATTA

THE efforts of the mouse to escape the cat figure in some fables, and were of sufficient interest to be portrayed, even by illuminators,<sup>1</sup> in many phases. Dante chose that in which the mouse gets into the clutches of several cats at once, or, rather, a sinner falls amongst several clawing demons.

*Tra male gatte era venuto il sorco.*<sup>2</sup>

Among malevolent cats the mouse had come.

The phrase has a thoroughly proverbial tone, and one might almost say that some particular tale or fable lay behind this line. Curiously enough, most Italian proverbs dealing with cats prefer the she-cat to the male, though proverbs wherein dogs figure rarely choose the bitch.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the female cat seems to be mentioned oftener, in at least the older Italian literature, than the male.<sup>4</sup> Whatever the truth as to this preference of she-cats to he-cats may be, Dante's line baffles

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Bibliographica*, vol. II, pp. 324-325.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XXII, 58.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Giusti's collection, *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Manuzzi. In nov. 112 of Franc. Sacchetti, a certain robbery is laid to a gatta, the fem. gender having apparently little or no sexual value. So, also, Boccaccio (nov. 79, 16), 'In una sua loggia gli avea dipinta la battaglia de' topi e della gatta.' Cf. note 2.



research. Perhaps the thought got its earliest proverbial setting from his pen. Considering the scores of proverbs or proverbial phrases in Shakespeare not to be found elsewhere, one would expect to find more in Dante. There are, however, apparently very few; for a thought that has become famous is not necessarily a proverb.

The she-cat is one of a dozen animals to which Dante compares his demons.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE MOUSE — IL SORCO — IL TOPO

‘MYSTICALLY,’ says Rabanus Maurus,<sup>1</sup> ‘mice signify men who, in their breathless eagerness for earthly gains, filch their booty from another’s store.’ So it was with Ciampolo, a political jobber, whom Dante<sup>2</sup> compares to a mouse that has fallen into the clutches of ill-minded cats; for Ciampolo, having got out of the hot pitch, has fallen amidst demons. The mouse is thus looked upon as a noxious beast. As Ciampolo has stolen public funds, so the mouse, by robbing another’s store, is finally rewarded by getting into the claws of malevolent cats.

Ciampolo hits on this trick to get away. If the demons will but stop their clawing awhile and stand aside<sup>3</sup> so that his fellow-jobbers may not fear, without budging from the spot he will whistle (the sign at which these jobbers emerge from the pitch to cool), and,

<sup>1</sup> *De Universo*, lib. VIII, 2, ‘Mystice autem mures significant homines cupiditate terrena inhiantes et prædam de aliena substantia surripientes.’

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XXII, 58, ‘Tra male gatte era venuto il sorco.’ The form ‘sorco’ (for ‘sorcio’) had become antiquated in Florence before 1550; for Gelli in his lectures on Dante (vol. II, p. 364) comments thus, ‘uno sorcio, cioè, diciamo noi.’ For another early occurrence of ‘sorco’ in its plural ‘sorchi,’ see *Liber de curis avium* in *Scelta di Curios. Lett.* vol. 140, p. 20, ‘. . . e troverai le plumate [rimanenza di pelo o di piuma?] pelose di sorchi,’ etc. <sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXII, 100.

whereas he is but one, will get seven to come.<sup>1</sup> The demon Cagnazzo mistrusts :—

‘Hear his malicious craft, to plunge below !’  
Then he, so rich in trickeries, replied :  
‘Yea, too malicious, seeking to obtain  
More misery for my comrades in the lake.’

—LONGFELLOW.

The demon Alichino, thinking himself too sly to be caught, leads the other demons to be deceived. The jobber dives, and Alichino tries in vain to catch him. The demon Calcabrina grapples with Alichino, both fall into the boiling pitch, whereat four demons with hooks rush to haul out their companions ‘ungrappled’ by the heat.

Thus Dante and Virgil leave them, and Dante is reminded of a fable :—

*Volto era in sulla favola d’ Isopo  
Lo mio pensier per la presente rissa,  
Dov’ ei parlò della rana e del topo ;  
Chè più non si pareggia mo ed issa,<sup>2</sup>  
Che l’ un con l’ altro fa, se ben s’ accoppia  
Principio e fine con la mente fissa.<sup>3</sup>*

Upon the fable of Æsop was directed  
My thought, by reason of the present quarrel.  
Where he has spoken of the frog and mouse ;  
For *mo* and *issa* are not more alike

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXII, 103–104.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Dicit ergo : che mo et issa, idest, ista duo vulgaria, quæ tantum significant quantum de præsentibus, sed aliqui tusci dicunt mo, aliqui lombardi dicunt issa.’—BENVENUTO DA IMOLA.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXIII, 4–9.

Than this one is to that, if well we couple  
End and beginning with a steadfast mind.

— LONGFELLOW.

Although Dante has already called the jobber Ciam-polo a mouse (XXII, 58), and compared the sinners in the pitch to frogs (XXII, 26–33), the fable seems to have been suggested to him rather by the immediate quarrel which Calcabrina had wished to have with Alichino (XXII, 135), just as the frog ‘deceitfully proposes to help the mouse.’ But in what fable? At least two versions, each of which (unlike the fable of the Cock and the Pearl) belongs to the older Æsopic literature, seem to contain the essence of Dante’s episode. In the branch assigned to Romulus the fable runs as follows:—

A mouse, wishing to cross a river, sought aid of a frog. The latter got a thick string, tied the mouse to his foot, and began to swim. But in mid-river, to snatch away the life of the wretched mouse, the frog dived down. Whilst the mouse was still struggling sturdily, a kite, flying down, caught the mouse in his claws, and carried him aloft with the hanging frog. For thus doth it befall those who think maliciously against others’ welfare.

The so-called *Anonymus Neveleti* bears more emphatically on the strife:—

A mouse, whose journey had brought him to a lake, met there a garrulous frog. The frog, having bargained for treasure, was eager to do harm. . . . So, then, foot is fastened to foot, but with no harmony of mind. Lo! they swim. The mouse is pulled, but the frog pulls. . . . The frog tries to go under, but the mouse stays up and withstands disaster.

Fear itself lends force, is the moral.<sup>1</sup>

Again, 'in the version of Marie de France,' to quote Mr. Toynbee,<sup>2</sup> 'the mouse is not drowned, but while she and the frog are struggling in the water the kite swoops down and carries off the frog, setting the mouse at liberty':—

*Li Escoufles par cuveitise*  
*La Soriz lait. La Raine ad prise,*  
*Mengiée l'ad e devourée,*  
*Et la Suriz est delivrée. (IV, 79-82.)*

The kite out of greed let go the mouse, but he kept the frog, ate him and devoured him, and the mouse is set free.

If, now, a close resemblance is to be found between the story told by Dante of the present strife and the fable, Ciampolo, who was earlier compared to a frog (XXII, 26-33), must be left out. The two demons, then, struggling in the pitch and hauled out after they have been ungrappled by the heat, are like the mouse and the frog, while the kite is represented by the rescuing demons. The deceit in Dante is more complicated. In fine, his description bears only a superficial similarity to any known version of the Æsopic fable.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. KENNETH MCKENZIE, *Dante's References to Æsop*, in the *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Dante Society*, Cambridge, 1898 (Boston, 1900), pp. 6-7. Text as given by McKenzie:—

'Muris iter rumpente lacu venit obvia muri  
 Rana loquax, et opem pacta nocere cupit . . .  
 Pes coit ergo pedi, sed mens a mente recedit.  
 Ecce natant. Trahitur ille, sed illa trahit. . . .  
 Rana studet mergi, sed mus emergit et obstat  
 Naufragio. Vires suggerit ipse timor. . . .'

<sup>2</sup> See his *Dictionary*, s.v. 'Esopo.'



According to Buti, Æsop was a 'little book read to small boys who are learning Latin (Grammatica), in which book are certain moralised fables to better their manners'; and Benvenuto da Imola declares that Æsop was an Asiatic poet who wrote a great work from which was culled that little book that the Latins use, in which, among other apologues, is that of the frog and the mouse.

Furthermore, the Anonymous Florentine says that from the version in Greek 'Grammar' was taken the Latin Isopetto, the third fable of which begins, 'Muris iter rumpente lacu,' etc. This is the version of the *Anonymus Neveleti*.

It was (so Dante says, XXIII, 5) the quarrel of the demons that suggested to him the fable. Hence his claim that the stories are as comparable as *mo* and *issa* is safe. The truth, however, seems to be that it was the Æsopic fable that suggested to Dante his scene of the quarrelling demons, as the bees suggested to him the heavenly rose. If we consider how Dante remembered and planned, the fact that his thought turns to Æsop only in the next canto becomes of little or no importance.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE MOLE

ARISTOTLE, basing his observation on the moles of Greece, states that they have rudimentary eyes beneath the skin, but are nevertheless blind.<sup>1</sup> For perhaps eighteen centuries this affirmation of the mole's blindness was followed both by classic Roman philosophers<sup>2</sup> and by virtually all medievals of the Occident,<sup>3</sup> who would no more have thought of looking into the matter than of trying to burn a salamander. Dante, however, who

<sup>1</sup> Tozer refers to *Hist. Animal.* I, 9, 3, and *De Anima*, III, 1, 5. In *Hist. Animal.* IV, 8, Aristotle says, 'Man, therefore, and terrestrial viviparous animals, and, besides these, sanguineous viviparous animals, are seen to possess all these [five senses] except some mutilated genus such as that of moles, since this animal is sightless. For the mole has not eyes externally apparent; but if a thick skin be taken off from the head, which skin is in the place of the eyes, certain rudimentary eyes will be seen, which have all the parts of perfect eyes,' etc. Could Dante have read this passage and given the mole sight on the principle that Nature really does nothing in vain? Kuhns (*The Treatment of Nature in Dante*, p. 147) obviously takes Dante's mole to be wholly blind, 'the mole is blind because of the pellicle over its eyes.'

<sup>2</sup> CICERO, *Acad.* IV, 25 *ad fin.* VIRGIL, *Georg.* I, 181-183. PLINY, XI, 52, 'Talpis visus non est; oculorum effigies inest, si quis praetentam detrahat membranam.' Cf. also ST. JEROME, *in Isai.* II, 19.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. HUGO OF ST. VICTOR (who apparently copies both Pliny and Aristotle), *De Bestiis*, III, 36, and BRUNETTO LATINI, *Tresor*, p. 252. Both these are nearly contemporaneous with Dante.

seems usually to have kept pace with science, implicitly denies that the mole is blind.

*Ricorditi, lettor, se mai nell' alpe<sup>1</sup>  
Ti colse nebbia, per la qual vedessi  
Non altrimenti che per pelle talpe;<sup>2</sup>  
Come quando i vapori umidi e spessi  
A diradar cominciarsi, la spera  
Del sol debilmente entra per essi;  
E fia la tua immagine leggiera  
In giugnere a veder, com' io rividi  
Lo sole in pria, che già nel corcare era.<sup>3</sup>*

Bethink thee, reader, if thou e'er hast been  
Among the Alps o'ertaken by a cloud,  
Through which all objects were as blindly seen  
As moles behold things through their visual shroud.  
How as the vapours dank and thick begin  
To thin themselves, the solar sphere's faint ray  
Scarce pierces them; then readily mayst thou  
Conceive, when first I saw it, in what way  
To me the sun looked that was fading now.

— PARSONS.

Benvenuto da Imola, writing about the year 1373,<sup>4</sup> comments on Dante's travels and the mole: 'And note here that, although the Alps vary in various parts of the world, nevertheless our poet is perchance speaking of the Apennines (*de Alpe Apennini*), and of that part between Bologna and Florence where he had experi-

<sup>1</sup> 'Alpe' means properly a lofty mountain, writes Vernon.

<sup>2</sup> 'Talpe' is probably singular. Scartazzini refers to *Vocabolario della Crusca* and Nannucci, *Teorica dei Nomi*, pp. 57, 61.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* XVII, 1-9.

<sup>4</sup> TOYNBEE, *Dante Studies and Researches*, p. 221.

enced that occurrence; . . . and note here that the mole's seeing appears to be shown in two ways: first, because it has eyes and Nature makes nothing in vain; secondly, because, as we see, the mole, straightway on seeing daylight, dies (*statim cum videt aerem moritur*)!; yet it sees feebly, because provident Nature furnished it with a thin membrane lest it should be harmed, because it is ever under earth.'

Benvenuto proceeds to cite Pliny,<sup>1</sup> who says that the mole is blind.

Though the American mole shows no outer vestige of eyes, nevertheless the common European mole can see. Whether Dante is the first to declare the fact would be hard to say.

Cuvier's researches<sup>2</sup> simply confirm Dante's verse in discrediting the proverb 'blind as a mole,' — unless the proverb means the same as 'blind as a bat.'

<sup>1</sup> *Nat. Hist.* XI, 52.

<sup>2</sup> *The Animal Kingdom, Arranged . . . by the Baron Cuvier . . . with Additional Descriptions by Edw. Griffiths. . . .* London, 1827, vol. II, pp. 197-199.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE BEAR

THE children of Bethel who mocked at Elisha, saying: 'Go up, thou baldhead! Go up, thou baldhead!' atoned for their insolence by one of those summary punishments with which Jahveh was wont to gratify the ancient Hebrews.<sup>1</sup> Elisha looked back at them and cursed them in the name of the Lord. Whether out of sympathy for Elisha, acting on their own impulse, or sent by Jahveh, 'there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them' — one of those savage miracles well known to students of demon lore.

The Vulgate does not specify the sex of the bears as feminine. Indeed, they are simply *ursi*,<sup>2</sup> and Dante follows the Vulgate in this case, though he changes the *pardus* of Jeremiah<sup>3</sup> to a *lonza* and the *lupus* to a *lupa*.

Dante recalls the miraculous harmony of Elisha's temper with that of Jahveh in a line:—

*E qual colui che si vengìo con gli orsi,  
Vide il carro d' Elia al dipartire.*<sup>4</sup>

And as he who avenged himself with the bears  
Beheld the chariot of Elijah at its start.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings ii, 23, 24.

<sup>2</sup> 'Egressi sunt duo ursi de saltu, et laceraverunt ex eis quadraginta duos pueros.'

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah v, 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* XXVI, 34-35.



It is not so important to note that the bears came to the rescue of Elisha in a way quite unprecedented, and never repeated even in myth, as to observe that Dante accepts the story seriously, and that it should be reckoned not only as a part of his art, but as a part of his zoölogy.<sup>1</sup> Whoever wrote the canzone<sup>2</sup> beginning,

*Così nel mio parlar voglio esser aspro,*

had seen the bears in a gentler frame of mind, performing, it may be, to win pennies for some juggler.<sup>3</sup> 'I should not be piteous nor courteous,' writes the poet:

*Anzi farei com' orso quando scherza.*

Rather I would act like a frisking bear.

The bear may figure as a demon or as a clown. He is also a creature greedy to advance his cubs for simony, and it is in this capacity that the she-bear is turned into an emphatic verse of the *Inferno*.<sup>4</sup>

The Orsini, bearing one of those animal nicknames so often adopted by the great families of medieval Italy (or perhaps thrust upon them), are said by the *Anonimo Fiorentino* to have habitually signed themselves 'de filiis ursæ.' There is no bear in the Orsini coat-of-arms,<sup>5</sup> and the warlike epithet is therefore precisely

<sup>1</sup> Cf. paragraph on miracles, pp. 16-17, on Serpent of Eden, pp. 330-332; cf. chapters on 'The Ass,' p. 159 ff., and on 'The Goose,' p. 315.

<sup>2</sup> Oxford Dante, *Canz.* XII, p. 163. As to genuineness, see FRATICELLI, *Dante, Opere Minori*, vol. I, pp. 137 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. STRUTT, *Sports and Pastimes*, chap. VI, and plates xxii and xxiii; also MURATORI, *De Ludis Medii Ævi*. <sup>4</sup> *Inf.* XIX, 70-71.

<sup>5</sup> See arms in LITTA, *Famiglie Celebri Italiani*, and in J. WOODWARD, *Heraldry, British and Foreign*, vol. I, pl. xi.

similar to *Il Mastin Vecchio* and *Can Grande della Scala*.

Dante takes advantage of the mere name to make out of it a characterisation both of a real bear and of Nicholas III, who was so given to simony that he availed himself of his holy office to endow his kinsmen with land, castles, and money. Hence the words of Nicholas to Dante, as the poet stops to gaze at the flaming heels of the whilom pope. The pope says:—

Know, if it so concern thy soul to know  
That thou hast ventured to explore this den,  
I the great mantle wore, and was indeed  
A true Orsini, whelp of that she-bear  
Whose cubs I strove to advance with such good speed  
That I'm bagged here as I bagged money there.<sup>1</sup>

— PARSONS.

The figure is bold and ably used, but the bear's nature is humanised too far when he is compared to a simoniacal pope.

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XIX, 67-72.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE HORSE

OF the various physical and mental traits of the horse that might please or interest a modern lover of nature Dante has not a word to say. Virgil found, at least, one inspiration in this animal, and splendidly described the steed of Mezentius.<sup>1</sup> Dante left out Nero entirely; and since he had no cut-and-dried plan to introduce such and such a fact in nature, the vehemence of his fury against dogs and wolves, his disdain for sheep, and his glorification of the falcon, compared with such slim attention to horses, are not extraordinary.

The wooden horse of Sinon<sup>2</sup> and the equally legendary steeds of Elijah he mentions; in one case to allow the counterfeiter Adam of Brescia to have his revengeful fling, in the other case to describe how he who avenged himself with the bears,

Beheld Elijah's chariot whirled on high,  
When up to heaven the soaring steeds ascended.<sup>3</sup>

— PARSONS.

To illustrate an opinion Dante declares that many times we say a noble horse and a worthless one because in every kind of thing we see the image of nobility or

<sup>1</sup> This passage, which excited the admiration of the English Alexander Neckam (Wright's ed., p. 260), occurs in the *Georgics* (III, 75 ff.).

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XXX, 118.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXVI, 36.

of worthlessness, which depend not upon ancestry; for, in animals and minerals, conditions have not changed.<sup>1</sup> 'We say of a man that he is worthy who lives in the active or contemplative life to which he is ordained by nature; we call a horse good (*virtuoso*)<sup>2</sup> that runs swiftly and far, to which end he is designed.' Such a valuation antedates obviously any evolutionary system. Again, the growth of our desires is marked for the poet by the fact that 'we see small children yearn for an apple; then for a little bird; and then, advancing farther, for a fine garment; and then a horse, and then a woman'!<sup>3</sup> Again, the poet speaks of robbers who with their plundered money furnish banquets, give horses, raiment, and arms, and think themselves noble givers.<sup>4</sup>

The horse, says Dante, is as necessary to a soldier as our language is to us, and, as those who think best must have the best tongue, so the best horses are fitted to the best soldiers.<sup>5</sup> It is more praiseworthy to know how to control a bad horse than one not bad,<sup>6</sup> and by 'bad' Dante of course means from the point of view of man.

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* IV, xiv, 79-95.

<sup>2</sup> *Conv.* I, v, 74-79, 'Onde dicemo uomo virtuoso quello, che vive in vita contemplativa o attiva, alle quali è ordinato naturalmente; dicemo del cavallo virtuoso, che corre forte e molto, alla qual cosa è ordinato.'

<sup>3</sup> *Conv.* IV, xii, 161-165, 'Onde vedemo li parvoli desiderare massimamente un pomo; e poi più oltre procedendo, desiderare uno uccellino; e poi più oltre, desiderare bello vestimento; e poi il cavallo; e poi una donna,' etc.

<sup>4</sup> *Conv.* IV, xxvii, 117-124.

<sup>5</sup> *De V. E.* II, i, 62-67.

<sup>6</sup> *Conv.* III, viii, 187-189, '. . . siccome è più laudabile un mal cavallo reggere, che un altro non reo.'

Once he mentions a troop of horsemen actually seen (Inf. XXII, 11); again, he beholds cavalry crowding about Trajan, — a sculptural fantasy (Purg. X, 79–80). Dante's vaguest allusion to the horse is that strange proverb of lost meaning, *Non ante tertiam equitabis* (Before the third hour thou shalt not ride).<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the phrase is based on a forgotten ordinance of municipal law.

On June 24th, St. John the Baptist's festival day, the Florentines raced Berber horses through Florence from west to east.<sup>2</sup> Whoever arrived first at the easternmost ward — that of San Piero — won. Where the horse-race ended Cacciaguida was born.

*Gli antichi miei ed io nacqui nel loco  
Dove si trova pria l' ultimo sesto  
Da quel che corre il vostro annual gioco.*<sup>3</sup>

My ancestors and I our birthplace had  
Where first is found the last ward of the city  
By him who runneth in your annual game.

— LONGFELLOW.

St. Peter Damian, in telling Dante how the popes have grown worse and worse, describes with delightful satire a fashion no longer common.

Came Cephas, and the mighty Vessel came  
Of the Holy Spirit, meagre and barefooted,

<sup>1</sup> *De V. E.* I, vii, 17–19, 'Quippe satis exstiterat; sed sicut proverbialiter dici solet, *non ante tertiam equitabis*, misera venire maluisti ad equum.'

<sup>2</sup> See BENVENUTO DA IMOLA, *Comentum super Dantis Aldigherii comædiam*, vol. V, pp. 161–162.

<sup>3</sup> *Parad.* XVI, 40–42.



Taking the food of any hostelry.

Now some one to support them on each side

The modern shepherds need, and some one to lead them,

So heavy are they, and to hold up their trains

They cover up their palfreys<sup>1</sup> with their cloaks,

So that two beasts go underneath one skin.<sup>2</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

Dante's thrusts are savage at times. He is carried far by an indiscriminating scorn. Two beasts beneath one skin! Benvenuto quaintly adds to our historical lore by saying that surely if our author were to come to life again to-day (about 1380), he could change that word and say, *sì che tre bestie van sotto una pelle*, to wit, a cardinal, a harlot, and a horse. Benvenuto adds that he had recently heard of one he well knew, who carried his concubine a-hunting on the rump of his horse or mule.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Though the meaning of palfrey wavers, the commonest seems to be a horse for everyday riding rather than a draught-horse or a war-horse. Alexander Neckam (p. 260) gives a description of a palfrey similar in all probability to the kind referred to by Dante. 'The palfrey,' says Neckam, 'is so called because he carries the bit at an easy gait (quasi passu leni frænum ducens!). He rejoices in seemly trappings. He likes little bells sweetly jingling on his breast, and the brilliance of a suitable jagged bit helps him. Stirrups (strepæ sive scansiliæ) make it easier for the rider as he presses the horse's back, and a strap holds the saddle, especially when the rider is raw in horsemanship.' See also John of Genoa, cited by Du Cange.

<sup>2</sup> *Parad.* XXI, 127-134.

<sup>3</sup> 'Li moderni pastori or voglion chi rincalzi quinci e quindi, scilicet—a dextris et sinistris, e chi li meni, tanto son gravi, idest pingues et corpulenti, quales multos vidi in curia romana; et hoc contra macredinem prædictorum; e chi gli alzi dirietro, quia habent cappas longas verentes terram cum cauda; et hoc contra nuditatem prædictorum. Et ideo, dolore stimulante, subdit; cuopron gli pala-

Of human appetite Dante declares it must be ridden by Reason; for, as a horse running loose, of however noble nature he be, by himself without a rider is not well guided, even so this Appetite which is called irascible and greedy, though it be noble, must obey reason. For reason guides it with bit and spurs, like a good rider; the bit he uses when pursuing, and that bit is called Temperance, which shows the goal at which his pursuit ends; the spur he uses when he flees . . . and this spur is called Strength or Magnanimity.<sup>1</sup>

Any incipient imagery is now lost in the moralising, rhetorical tone. Once more the will is a horse to be restrained; for Dante cries out to his erring Italy:—

What though Justinian made new reins for thee?  
 What boots it if the saddle remain void?  
 Without his mending thy disgrace were less.  
 And O ye tribe that ought to be employed  
 In your devotions, and let Cæsar press  
 The seat of Cæsar, if God's word you heed!  
 See, since your hand hath on the bridle been,  
 How wanton grown and wicked is the steed  
 Through want from you of the spur's discipline,  
 O German Albert! Who abandonest

freni, pingues et politos, sicut ipsi sunt, de' manti loro, quia eorum chlamydes sunt ita longæ, amplæ et capaces, quod cooperiunt hominem et equum; unde dicit: si che due bestie van sotto una pelle, scilicet bestia portans, et ipse portatus, qui verius est bestia et bestialior ipsa bestia. Et certe si autor revivisceret hodie posset mutare literam istam et dicere: Si che tre bestie van sotto una pelle, scilicet, cardinalis, meretrix et equus; sicut audiui de uno quem bene novi, qui portabat concubinam suam ad venationem post se in clune equi vel muli; et ipse vere erat sicut equus et mulus sine ratione.'

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* IV, xxvi, 41-59.

Her now run wild, unchecked by curb of thine,  
 When thou shouldst ride her with thy heels hard pressed,  
 May Heaven's just judgment light upon thy line !<sup>1</sup>

— PARSONS.

The same thought occurs when Dante declares that the Emperor is a rider of the human will, which, like a riderless horse, is manifestly wandering over the field, and specially in unhappy Italy, which has remained without any means for her control.<sup>2</sup>

Again, having syllogised as to how human bliss must be attained by divers means, through philosophic teachings and teachings spiritual which transcend the human will, Dante declares that human greed would turn its back on these sacred things if men, wandering in their bestiality, were not held in by bit and bridle on the road as horses are.<sup>3</sup> To those who yield to the Devil's wiles, bit or reclayme is of small avail.<sup>4</sup>

Not only has the horse no mind of its own, but, whether under the sway of God or of a demon, he drags Corso Donati toward the mouth of hell. Villani<sup>5</sup> writes that Corso, hard pressed by Catalans, and being gouty

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* VI, 91-101.

<sup>2</sup> *Conv.* IV, ix, 100-108.

<sup>3</sup> *De Mon.* III, xvi, 66-74, 'Hæc . . . humana cupiditas postergaret, nisi homines tamquam equi, sua bestialitate vagantes, in camo et freno compescerentur in via.'

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* XIV, 145-147 : —

'Ma voi prendete l' esca, sì che l' amo  
 Dell' antico avversario a sè vi tira ;  
 E però poco val freno o richiamo.'

Another still vaguer allusion to the horse occurs in *Inf.* II, 48 : —

'Come falso veder bestia, quando ombra.'

<sup>5</sup> *Cron.* VIII, 96, cited by Toynbee.

both in feet and hands, let himself fall from his horse, and that one of the Catalans gave him a mortal spear-thrust and left him for dead. Such mainly is the story of Dino Compagni.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps our poet in his exile got some false version, or, again, it may be that the horse that dragged Corso to his death was the populace, thus metamorphosed for the sake of a lively allegory. Forese speaks:—

‘ Now go,’ he said, ‘ for him most guilty of it  
At a beast’s tail behold I dragged along  
Towards the valley where is no repentance.  
Faster at every step the beast is going,  
Increasing evermore until it smites him  
And leaves the body vilely mutilated.’<sup>2</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

If Corso Donati was dragged to death by a horse, a still stranger episode is brought to light by Dante — a ghastly episode, wherein humour, ingenuity, and shameless greed are all united in the uncouth scene that contributed to the damnation of one Gianni or Vanni Schicchi.

Simon Donati, being dissatisfied with his father Buoso’s will, resorted to Gianni Schicchi, who knew how to counterfeit the voice or acts of any one. Schicchi got into Buoso’s bed, put on Buoso’s nightcap, and, when the notary had arrived, proceeded to make Buoso’s will.

‘ I leave,’ said he, ‘ twenty pence to the building fund of Santa Reparata, and five pounds to the Lesser Friars

<sup>1</sup> *Cron.* III, 21, cited by Toynbee.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* XXIV, 82–87.



and five to the Preachers' — Simon was delighted — 'and I leave,' he went on, 'I leave five hundred florins to Gianni Schicchi.'

Says Simon to Messer Buoso : —

'No need of putting this in the will. I'll give it to him as you bequeathe.'

'Simon, let me have my way. I leave you so well off, you ought to be contented.'

For fear Simon kept still. Schicchi went on : —

'And I leave to Gianni Schicchi my she-mule ;' for Messer Buoso owned the finest in all Tuscany.

This is the version of the Anonymous Florentine.<sup>1</sup> But Jacopo della Lana and Benvenuto both declare it was a mare, and Benvenuto says she was the dearest in all Tuscany, for she was worth a thousand florins. Another nameless commentator records that she was the finest mare that had been in Buoso's herd, and that her name was Madonna Tonina.

Had Gianni Schicchi shown himself a rascal in no other way, his device to get the lady of the herd would have won him Dante's vicarious damnation. The poet feigns to have seen Gianni Schicchi in Hell, — a mad sprite rending his fellow-sinners : —

'Who is yon other ? Ere it vanish, say.'  
And he to me : 'Thou seest the ancient shade  
Of sinful Myrrha, one that, overwarm  
With love not filial for her father, made  
Wanton with him, in counterfeited form ;  
Even as yon other, that he might obtain  
The lady of the herd, with wicked skill

<sup>1</sup> Ed. of Lord Vernon, Florence, 1848.



Buoso Donati's person dared to feign,  
Fixing a forged seal to a forged will.'

— PARSONS.

*Questa a peccar con esso così venne  
Falsificando sè in altrui forma  
Come l' altro che là sen va, sostenne  
Per guadagnar la donna della torma,<sup>1</sup>  
Falsificare in sè Buoso Donati,  
Testando, e dando al testamento norma.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> GREGORIO DI SIENA, 'La più vistosa cavalla dell' armento buono a propagar la razza.' Cf. HORACE (*Od.* I, 17) : —

' Impune tutum per nemus arbutos  
Quærent latentes et thyma deviæ  
Olentis uxores mariti. . . '

Buti also says 'cavalla.' The Anonimo Fiorentino, fallible like all copyists, seems in this case to have blundered.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XXX, 40-45.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE MULE

IN a hell pit assigned by Dante to thieves our poet sees a man, whom a serpent has just bitten, kindle and burn to ashes and resume his previous shape in less time than it takes to write O or I. Virgil asks the man who he was, and gets this reply :<sup>1</sup>—

*‘ Io piovvi di Toscana,  
Poco tempo è, in questa gola fera.  
Vita bestial mi piacque, e non umana,<sup>2</sup>  
Sì come a mul ch’ io fui ; son Vanni Fucci  
Bestia, e Pistoia mi fu degna tana.’*

‘ I rained from Tuscany  
A short time since into this cruel gorge.  
A bestial life and not a human pleased me,  
Even as the mule I was ; I’m Vanni Fucci,  
Beast, and Pistoia was my worthy den.’

— LONGFELLOW.

Being urged to say more, Fucci goes on :—

‘ What thou demandest I cannot deny ;  
So low am I put down because I robbed  
The sacristy of the fair ornaments.’<sup>3</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXIV, 121–126.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter on ‘The Lower Animals,’ p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXIV, 136–138.

Vanni Fucci now foretells disaster to the Whites, lifts his fingers in an infamous gesture, and cries:—

‘Take that, God, for at thee I aim them.’<sup>1</sup>

What led Dante to call Vanni Fucci a mule? Though the question is answered vaguely by Dante’s own lines, for further understanding we must go to the chroniclers.

Benvenuto da Imola records that Vanni Fucci was the bastard son of Messer Fucci de’ Lazzari of Pistoia, that he was a great scoundrel, most bold for every crime, and though often banished for enormous offences, nevertheless he often was in the city by night with most base companions.

A contemporary document<sup>2</sup> describes Vanni Fucci as one of three unspeakable (*nephandi*) citizens, but an abusive generality is not characterisation. Landino characterises the *deed* rather than the *man*. Dante had seen this Fucci alive,<sup>3</sup> and must have known the fellow’s reputation in Pistoia, but why the poet calls him a mule—a word not elsewhere used by Dante—must remain obscure unless we are willing to accept the explanation of Benvenuto da Imola, who lived a century after Vanni, and may have got his ideas not only from older records, but from the words of Dante.

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXV, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. CIAMPI, ‘*Notizie inedite della Sagrestia pistoiese de’ belli arredi*,’ cited by Toynbee in *Dante Dictionary*, p. 253.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXIV, 129, ‘Ch’ io il vidi uomo di sangue e di crucci’ (For him I saw a man of blood and wrath). The phrase ‘a mulo’ shows a general human tendency (here manifested by chance in Dante) to look upon the ugly traits of men as characteristic of various ‘lower’ animals. For further villanies laid at Vanni’s door, see VERNON, *Readings on Inf.* vol. II, 291–292; also 295–297.

Benvenuto says: 'Note that he (Vanni) was truly a mule, naturally and morally, because he was a bastard born of a bastard (*spurius natus de spurio*). For the mule is born of a cursed coition; to wit, of a mare and of an ass, and rather he follows the ass than the mare, though he called himself the grandson of the horse in the presence of the lion. He is a hard animal, fit for toil and for blows, a loiterer, and stubborn. And such was that obstinate thief. A mule is sterile; so was he baleful to all. A mule is without reason and beyond correction; wherefore it is said in the Psalms, *Nolite fieri sicut equus et mulus, in quibus non est intellectus.*'

## CHAPTER XX

### THE ASS

'THINGS should be named,' writes Dante,<sup>1</sup> 'from the ultimate nobility of their character; as a man from reason and not from feeling, nor from anything less noble. Wherefore when it is said man lives, it should be understood man uses reason, which is his special life, and the act of his noblest part. And therefore whoever abandons reason and uses only the senses, lives not as a man, but as a beast, as says that most excellent Boethius, An ass he lives (*Asino vive*).' Boethius asks, *Segnis ac stupidus torpet?* and answers, *Asinum vivit*.<sup>2</sup> One need speculate very little to understand Dante's not altogether original estimate.<sup>3</sup> But how came he to depict his sluggards in so dreadful an attitude?

*Questi sciaurati, che mai non fur vivi,  
Erano ignudi e stimolati molto  
Da mosconi e da vespe ch' erano ivi.  
Elle rigavan lor di sangue il volto,  
Che mischiato di lagrime, ai lor piedi,  
Da fastidiosi vermi era ricolto.*<sup>4</sup>

These miscreants, who never were alive,  
Were naked, and were stung exceedingly

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* II, viii, 15-27. See, also, *Conv.* IV, xv, 58-63.

<sup>2</sup> *De Consol. Phil.* IV, Pros. iii.

<sup>3</sup> In the Bible, asses cut no such sorry figure as in the literature and daily talk of Europe.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* III, 64-69.



By gadflies and by hornets that were there.  
 These did their faces irrigate with blood,  
 Which with their tears commingled at their feet  
 By the disgusting worms was gathered up.

— LONGFELLOW.

Surely the poet never saw men really undergoing such a torment for their sloth, but beasts of burden he certainly had seen, and it may be that some dull, toiling ass, blear-eyed from poor fodder, and stung to bleeding by the hot insects of some Italian highway, suggested to Dante this rather novel torture for the damned.

So dull an animal could surely not speak, and, indeed, Dante declares that if any one make objection as to the she-ass of Balaam, he will respond that the speaker was really an angel;<sup>1</sup> and once more he says:<sup>2</sup> 'O Fathers, deem me not a phoenix in the world. For what I cry out is murmured or thought or dreamt by all. And wherefore bear they not witness to their discoveries? Some hang in astonishment. Are they, too, ever to be silent and never speak out for their Maker? The Lord liveth! and He whoset going the tongue of Balaam's ass is Lord even of the brutes of to-day.'

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Numbers xxii, 21-33, with *De V. E.* I, ii, 43-52: 'Et si obiciatur de serpente loquente ad primam mulierem, vel de asina Balaam, quod locuti sint; ad hoc respondemus, quod angelus in illa, et diabolus in illo taliter operati sunt, quod ipsa animalia moverent organa sua, sic et vox resultavit inde distincta, tanquam vera locutio; non quod aliud esset asinæ illud quam rudere, nec quam sibillare serpenti.' For further treatment of Balaam's ass, see paragraph on language, pp. 23-25.

<sup>2</sup> *Epist.* VIII, viii, 122-131.

The ass, then, in Dante's philosophy is not merely a sluggard without brains. It is also an automaton, an animated toy moved to speech, in one case by an angel (acting as a transmitting operator), and in the other by the Creator.

## CHAPTER XXI

### CATTLE

OF some fifteen references to cattle in Dante four are Biblical and six <sup>1</sup> are drawn from Latin literature. All but one are singularly devoid of life; for they are either bookish or moral, or fail to create an illusion.

Ezekiel saw the likeness of four living creatures. 'As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.' <sup>2</sup> Again, the writer of the Apocalypse beheld four beasts, 'And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.' <sup>3</sup>

By Dante's time Christian allegory had fixed upon four symbols for the Evangelists. St. Luke was the ox, and thus appears in countless manuscripts and sculptures or stained glass windows throughout medieval Christendom. Hence, in a letter to Henry the Emperor, Dante (after St. Luke ii, 1), declares that Augustus decreed all the world should be taxed 'as our evangelising

<sup>1</sup> Vs. 18 of Dante's first Eclogue, '*. . . dum lenta boves per gramina ludunt,*' has a conventional Virgilian ring, and is at all events classic in manner.

<sup>2</sup> Ezekiel i, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Revelation iv, 7.

ox bellows, being kindled with the flame of an eternal fire.' <sup>1</sup>

In Purgatory he saw a sculpture of the oxen drawing the ark.

There sculptured in the selfsame marble were  
The cart and oxen, drawing the holy ark.<sup>2</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

St. John in his vision saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns.<sup>3</sup> Dante beheld an equally fantastic monster. He says that the allegorical car seen by him in Purgatory

Thrust forward heads upon the parts of it  
Three on the pole and one at either corner.  
The first were horned like oxen; but the four  
Had but a single horn upon the forehead.<sup>4</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

Purely classic and lifeless, both in Ovid<sup>5</sup> and in Dante, is the Sicilian bull, a brazen device made by Perillus for Phalaris, tyrant of Agrigentum, to burn the tyrant's victims. Perillus was the first to get into that oven. Among the fraudulent counsellors in Hell whom the poet saw wrapped, each in a flame, was one from whom issued a confused sound:—

<sup>1</sup> *Epist.* VII, iii, 64-67, 'Et quum universaliter orbem describi edixisset Augustus (ut bos noster evangelizans, accensus ignis æterni flamma, remugit),' etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* X, 55-56.

<sup>3</sup> Revelation xiii, 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* XXXII, 143-146.

<sup>5</sup> *Ars Amat.* I, 653-656. Paget Toynbee thinks Dante may have got the story from Orosius (I, 20), or from Valerius Maximus (IX, 2). See *Dante Dictionary*, s.v. 'Perillo.'

*Come il bue Cicilian che mugghiò prima  
 Col pianto di colui (e ciò fu dritto)  
 Che l' avea temperato con sua lima,  
 Mugghiava con la voce dell' afflitto,  
 Sì che, con tutto ch' ei fosse di rame,  
 Pure e' pareva dal dolor trafitto.<sup>1</sup>*

As the Sicilian bull (that bellowed first  
 With the lament of him, and that was right,  
 Who with his file had modulated it)  
 Bellowed so with the voice of the afflicted  
 That, notwithstanding it was made of brass,  
 Still it appeared with agony transfixed.

— LONGFELLOW.

Our poet also mentions the bull of Pasiphaë, known to him both from Ovid and Virgil.<sup>2</sup> Though the Latin descriptions usually call the bull '*taurus*,' Virgil once speaks of the young bull (*iuvencus*).<sup>3</sup> Hence '*torello*' rather than '*toro*' in Dante's description. Whilst one group of rueful sinners in Purgatory cries '*Soddoma e Gomorra!*' the other cries:—

*Nella vacca entra Pasife,  
 Perche il torello a sua lussuria corra.<sup>4</sup>*

Into the cow enters Pasiphaë,  
 That the little bull unto her lust may run.

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXVII, 7-13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ecl.* VI, 45-60; *Æn.* VI, 24-26, 447. OVID, *Met.* VIII, 131-137; *Ars Amat.* I, 289 ff. See *Dante Dictionary*, s.v. 'Pasife.'

<sup>3</sup> 'Pasiphaën nivei solatur amore iuveni' (*Ecl.* VI, 46). Jacopo della Lana devotes much space to this unsavoury theme, emphasising the youth of the bull.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* XXVI, 41-42. The *sua* of vs. 42 may refer to Pasife or to the *torello*, both grammatically and in conformity with the legend.



To Dante the Minotaur, the infamy of Crete, was conceived in the false cow — *la falsa vacca* (Inf. XII, 13) — and Pasiphaë is she 'who made herself a beast in beastly wood,' *che s' imbestiò nell' imbestiate schegge* (Purg. XXVI, 87).

It is from an epigram of Horace<sup>1</sup> that Dante gets his 'ox in housings,' by which he means something as ugly and uncouth as a 'belted swine.' From Virgil's comparison of the cries of Laocoön to the bellowings of a wounded bull,<sup>2</sup> Dante takes his comparison of the enraged and staggering Minotaur: —

*Qual è quel toro che si slaccia in quella  
Che ha ricevuto già 'l colpo mortale,  
Che gir non sa, ma qua e là saltella,  
Vid'io lo Minotauro far cotale.*<sup>3</sup>

As is that bull who breaks loose at the moment  
In which he has received the mortal blow,  
Who cannot walk but staggers here and there,  
The Minotaur beheld I do the like.

— LONGFELLOW.

Virgil's description, as reworded and bettered by Dante, would no doubt be true of many an ox put to death in the heartlessly clumsy style of those times; but the cruelty is still plainer when our poet foretells the

<sup>1</sup> *Epist.* I, xiv, 43-44, cited by Moore (see *De V. E.* II, i, 80-81): —

'Optat ephippia bos piger, optat arare caballus.  
Quam scit uterque, libens censebo, exerceat artem.'

<sup>2</sup> *Æn.* II, 223-224: —

'Qualis mugitus, fugit cum saucius aram  
Taurus et incertam excussit cervice securim.'

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XII, 22-25.

fate of many Whites and Ghibellines at the hands of Messer Fulcieri da Calboli.

*Vende la carne loro, essendo viva ;  
Poscia gli ancide come antica belva.<sup>1</sup>*

He sells their flesh, it being yet alive ;  
Thereafter slaughters them like ancient beeves.

— LONGFELLOW.

How perfect the analogy between this Fulcieri, who sold his human meat to an agent of Charles of Valois, and of the unsentimental butcher, vending his beef ! Each kills after selling. That was the style. The ox toils until worn with age, and then, no longer useful to drag the plough, is ruthlessly slaughtered, — his last opportunity to be useful to man.

Dante, in his journey round and up the Mountain of Purgatory, walked with one laden soul

*Di pari, come buoi che vanno a giogo.<sup>2</sup>*

At the same gait, as yoked oxen go.

Thus Homer (whom Dante scarcely knew), describes at greater length yoked oxen at the plough : —

But as on fallow land, with one accord,  
Two dark-red oxen drag the well-wrought plough,

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XIV, 61–62. On *belva*, two commentators have this to say : BENV. DA IMOLA, ‘Idest bestia, sicut bos innocens in senectute securi percutitur’ ; ANON. FIOR., ‘Belva è propriamente ogni animale che vive in acqua et in terra. Come la bufola, che quando ella si viene a uccidere, acciò che la carne sia più trita, come si fa del verro, gli si dà molte mazzate et uccidesi,’ etc. But the world does move ! <sup>2</sup> *Purg.* XII, 1. Cf. the proverb in *Parad.* XVI, 70.

Streaming with sweat that gathers round their horns ;  
 They, by the polished yoke together held,  
 The stiff soil cleaving, down the furrow strain ;  
 So closely side by side these two advanced.<sup>1</sup>

Again, in a letter addressed to all Italians, Dante draws image after image from husbandry, and finally, as if by a vague recollection of Cincinnatus, he bids his fellow-men 'conceive like a fertile valley and put forth green, — the green that is fruitful of true peace ; and, in truth, in this new verdure will the new husbandman of the Romans [Henry, Divine, Augustus, and Cæsar] yoke the oxen of his counsel more kindly and more trustfully to the plough.'<sup>2</sup>

In a letter to the Italian cardinals Dante finds warrant for giving advice because, unlike Uzzah, who sinfully laid his hand on the ark, he is heeding the oxen who are kicking and straggling off the road.<sup>3</sup> By the ark Dante means the Church, and by the oxen, her priests.

Once only does Dante draw an original and homely image from the habits of cattle. A sinner twisted his mouth awry, then stuck out his tongue like an ox that licks its nose.

*Qui distorse la bocca, e di fuor trasse  
 La lingua, come 'l bue che il naso lecchi.*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad*, XIII, 704 ff., the Earl of Derby's translation, cited by W. W. Vernon.

<sup>2</sup> *Epist.* V, especially 80-84, 'Qua quidem viriditate vestra terra vernante, novus agricola Romanorum consilii sui boves ad aratrum affectuosius et confidentius coniugabit.' C. S. Latham's translation.

<sup>3</sup> *Epist.* VIII, v, 85-89. Cf. 2 Samuel vi, 3-7, and 12-17.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* XVII, 74-75.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE SWINE

IT is said of Rinaldo degli Scrovigni, a usurer of Padua, that he died crying, 'Give me the key of my box that no one may find my money !'<sup>1</sup> Dante put this man among the usurers in Hell, but, apparently, did not turn to account Rinaldo's blazon — a teeming sow azure on a field argent.<sup>2</sup> From the neck of each usurer hung a pouch on which his eyes seemed to feed. Dante says:—

That from the neck of each there hung a pouch  
Which certain colour had and certain blazon ;  
And thereupon it seems their eyes are feeding.  
And as I, gazing round me, come among them,  
Upon a yellow pouch I azure saw  
That had the face and posture of a lion.  
Proceeding then the current of my sight,  
Another of them saw I, red as blood,  
Display a goose more white than butter is.  
And one who with an azure sow and gravid  
Emblazoned had his little pouch of white,  
Said unto me : 'What dost thou in this moat ?'

— LONGFELLOW.

<sup>1</sup> See SALVATICO, *Dante e Padova*, Padua, 1865, pp. 107 ff., cited by Scartazzini on *Inf.* XVII, 64.

<sup>2</sup> BENVENUTODA IMOLA, 'Scrovigni autem portant porcam azurram, in campo albo, et inde denominati sunt, sicut quidam nobilis romanus cognominatus est Scroffa ut refert Macrobius libro primo Saturnaliū' (I, 6). *Grossa* (*Inf.* XVII, 64) is a detail of the Scrovigni arms added (probably with heraldic authority) by Dante.

*Che dal collo a ciascun pendea una tasca,  
 Che avea certo colore e certo segno,  
 E quindi par che il loro occhio si pasca.  
 E com' io riguardando tra lor vegno,  
 In una borsa gialla vidi azzurro,  
 Che d' un leone avea faccia e contegno.  
 Poi procedendo di mio sguardo il curro,  
 Vidine un' altra come sangue rossa  
 Mostrare un' oca bianca più che burro,  
 Ed un, che d' una scrofa azzurra e grossa<sup>1</sup>  
 Segnato avea lo suo sacchetto bianco,  
 Mi disse: ' Che fai tu in questa fossa? ' <sup>2</sup>*

Unless Dante added without heraldic authority the word *grossa* (teeming), he obviously means here not to symbolise, but to identify. Nevertheless Dante loathes swine. Carrying a little farther the epigram of Horace:<sup>3</sup>—

*Optat ephippia bos piger, optat arare caballus.  
 Quam scit uterque, libens, censebo, exerceat artem, —*

Dante writes, 'Neither an ox in housings nor a belted swine shall we call beautified, but rather the gain of ugliness will excite us to mockery.'<sup>4</sup> And again, in commending a canzone to Dame Philosophy, he refers to Christ's behest not to cast pearls before swine.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Not registered in any accessible book on heraldry.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XVII, 55-66.

<sup>3</sup> *Epist.* I, xiv, 43-44, 'The dull ox chooses caparisons; the horse chooses to plough. I'll say, "Let each ply gladly the art he knows."'

<sup>4</sup> *De V. E.* II, i, 80-83, 'Sed nec bovem ephippiatum, nec balteatum suum dicemus ornatum, immo potius ridemus illum.'

<sup>5</sup> Matthew vii, 6. *Conv.* IV, xxx, 36-40.



It is from Virgil's description of the witch Circe<sup>1</sup> that Dante gets his epithet for the people of Casentino on the Arno. Before flowing by the curs of Arezzo, the wolves of Florence, and the Pisan foxes, the river passes ugly swine.

*Tra brutti porci, più degni di galle  
Che d' altro cibo fatto in uman uso,  
Dirizza prima il suo povero calle.*<sup>2</sup>

Mid ugly swine, of acorns worthier  
Than other food for human use created,  
It first directeth its impoverished way.

— LONGFELLOW.

With more of anthropocentric rage than of philosophical insight the poet conceives acorns to be a base food; for men the Creator invented nobler foods. But why are these people of Casentino 'swine'?

Benvenuto da Imola, whose capacity as a historian is notable, affirms that these swine are the Counts Guido, whom Dante rightly calls swine, for their foul lust. Once these counts held sway over the city of Ravenna, but in the people's rage were almost all slaughtered on account of their uncurbed lechery.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Virgil (*Æneid* VII, 15, 17-20) describes how the enchantress turned her victims into lions, swine, bears, and wolves. Virgil's *sætigerique sues* (bristly swine) are Dante's *brutti porci*:—

' Hinc exaudiri gemitus iræque leonum, . . .  
Sætigerique sues, atque in præsepibus ursi  
Sævire, ac formæ magnorum ululare luporum,  
Quos hominum ex facie dea sæva potentibus herbis  
Induerat Circe in voltus ac terga ferarum.'

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* XIV, 43-45.

<sup>3</sup> 'Dicit quod Arnus primo transit per porcos, idest comites Gui-

The wrathful Filippo Argenti strives to climb out of a dead pool of Inferno into the bark of Phlegyas, but is thrust off by Virgil, who cries, 'Back with the other dogs!' then says to Dante:—

*Quei fu al mondo persona orgogliosa ;  
Bontà non è che sua memoria fregi :  
Cost è l' ombra sua qui furiosa.<sup>1</sup>  
Quanti si tengon or lassù gran regi,  
Che qui staranno come porci in brago,  
Di sè lasciando orribili dispregi !<sup>2</sup>*

donec, quos appellat porcos propter foedam luxuriam; et merito. Ubi nota, quod isti comites olim habuerunt dominium in civitate Ravennæ; sed fuerunt fere omnes trucidati propter effrænatam libidinem.' Cf. VINCENT OF BEAUVAIS (*Speculum morale*, lib. III, dis. III, pars IX, col. 1383), 'Luxuriosi sunt sicut sus, qui libentius habet nares in stercorebus quam in floribus.' BOCCACCIO, 'La lussuria per la sua brutezza è somigliata al porco.' HORACE (*Epist.* I, ii, 23-26):—

'Sirenium voces et Circæ pocula nosti;  
Quæ si cum sociis stultus cupidusque bibisset,  
Sub domina meretrice fuisset turpis et excors,  
Vixisset canis immundus vel amica luto sus.'

<sup>1</sup> Le Roy Modus thus moralises on the Wild Boar (*feuillet* LXIV), 'The third property of the wild boar is that he is proud (*orgueilleux*); for through his pride he getteth death, since he will not flee before the dogs but awaits them, wherefore he is slain (*occis et tué*). And thus it is with those who are now so proud that they wait for the devils, who, running upon them, lead them and drive them so from sin to sin that they are slain and die of the spiritual death because of their pride. The fourth property is that he is a wrangler and rusheth furiously upon people, upon dogs, and upon horses, when he is hot with anger; wherefore he getteth death (*par quoi il chace la mort*). Thus it is with many who are now in this world; for they are so full of wrath and empty of reason that they run at one another, truly for small cause, wherefore death doth often follow.'

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* VIII, 46-51.

That was an arrogant person in the world ;  
 Goodness is none, that decks his memory ;  
 So likewise here his shade is furious.  
 How many are esteemed great kings up there,  
 Who here shall be like unto swine in mire,  
 Leaving behind them horrible dispraises !

— LONGFELLOW.

With what terrific imagery Dante enforces Christ's promise that the first shall be last !

Not only is the swinish element in men's souls, but, when these men have become demons, swine's tusks are added to make the monster more horrible, and we have a Ciriatto whose name itself suggests that the demon — this Ciriatto *sannuto*<sup>1</sup> — is part wild boar, who uses his tusks to rip the damned.<sup>2</sup> Most curious of all is Dante's allusion to the pigs of St. Anthony — Tantony pigs. In the very Crystalline Heaven Beatrice bursts out fiercely against the chattering priests who talk so idly that the flocks go home fed merely on wind.

*Ora si va con motti e con iscede  
 A predicare, e pur che ben si rida,  
 Gonfia il cappuccio, e più non si richiede.*<sup>3</sup>

Now men go forth with jests and drolleries  
 To preach, and if but well the people laugh,  
 The hood puffs out and nothing more is asked.

— LONGFELLOW.

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXI, 122.

<sup>2</sup> 'E Ciriatto, a cui di boccia uscìa  
 D' ogni parte una sanna come a porco,  
 Gli fe' sentir come l' una sdrucia.'

— *Inf.* XXII, 55-57.

<sup>3</sup> *Parad.* XXIX, 115-117.

Without proof of any testimony the people would flock to any indulgence. They are all credulity.

By this St. Anthony his pigs doth fatten  
And many others who are worse than pigs,  
Paying in money without mark of coinage.

— LONGFELLOW.

*Di questo ingrassa il porco Sant' Antonio  
Ed altri ancor, che son assai più porci  
Pagando di moneta senza conio.*<sup>1</sup>

In Dante's time St. Anthony's monks were privileged. Their pigs wandered at will, eating with impunity whatever they found, and sometimes attacking, not only children in the streets, but grown men. In England,<sup>2</sup> in Venice,<sup>3</sup> in Florence, these Tantony pigs roamed and

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* XXIX, 124-126.

<sup>2</sup> HALLIWELL, *Dict. of Arch. and Prov. Words*, defines, 'Anthony-Pig, the favourite or smallest pig of the litter.' A Kentish expression, according to Grose, 'to follow like a Tantony pig,' *i.e.* to follow close at one's heels. 'Some derive this saying from a privilege enjoyed by the friars of certain convents in England and France, sons of St. Anthony, whose swine were permitted to feed in the streets. These swine would follow any one having greens or other provisions till they obtained some of them, and it was, in those days, considered an act of charity and religion to feed them. St. Anthony was invoked for the pig.' Cited by Longfellow.

<sup>3</sup> 'Among other privileges of the Church, abolished in Venice long ago, was that ancient right of the monks of St. Anthony Abbot, by which their herds of swine were made free of the whole city. These animals, enveloped in an odour of sanctity, wandered here and there, and were piously fed by devout people until the year 1409, when, being found dangerous to children and inconvenient to everybody, they were made the subject of a special decree, which deprived them of the freedom of movement. The Republic was always opposing and limiting the privileges of the Church!' — W. D. HOWELLS, *Venetian Life*, cited by Longfellow.



fattened, at the cost of every one but their owners. The luxury of the pigs and the annoyance of the citizens are humorously portrayed in a novella by Francesco Sacchetti,<sup>1</sup> whose narrative resurrects at least one Florentine household of the fourteenth century.

A neighbour of Francesco, a gouty, bedridden glutton, was much bothered by St. Anthony's pigs, which had a way of strolling into his bedroom, where, with various canonical friends, he passed his time allaying hunger and thirst. Now, one day, two pigs of St. Anthony came in; whereupon the glutton cried to his slow-witted serving-boy: 'A plague upon the pigs! Let's kill them!' 'Do not jest with St. Anthony,' said one who was there. 'What!' said the gouty one, 'are you one of the simpletons who think St. Anthony has to salt his meat? For whom? His family? There is no eating and no drinking up there, but these gobbling knaves with a T on their breasts would have us believe idle tales. Fetch me an axe.' It was done, and the next day when the pigs came in the boy assailed them. The pigs jumped on to the bed and trampled on the gouty man. They were screaming like mad; one pig was spurting a shower of blood, both were grunting and squealing, while they viciously faced the boy, who had climbed on to a box. The glutton began to cry: 'Help! help! I'm dead!' Presently in came a gentleman who attacked the pigs, which fell squealing behind the bed. So tightly were the pigs squeezed in that they could not be got out until the bedstead had been undone and carried into another room. Thus ended the hunt.

<sup>1</sup> Nov. 110, referred to by Scartazzini.



The boy had been bitten, and the glutton so mauled that he was nearly dead. St. Anthony did this miracle, whence comes the saying, 'Jest with the boys and leave the saints alone.'

In Dante's grim estimate of St. Anthony's monks and their Tantony pigs there is a slight gleam of humour, unmeant by the poet, but perceptible to those who can imagine his scorn for the fat monks and their impudent pigs — an everyday sight in Dante's Florence. But Dante has limned the swine in a fiercer mood, rushing half-wild and starved from its sty, and biting madly. Many cruelties had been known to Dante;

*Ma nè di Tebe furie nè Troiane  
Si vider mai in alcun tanto crude,  
Non punger bestie, non che membra umane,  
Quant' io vidi due ombre smorte e nude,  
Che mordendo correvan di quel modo  
Che il porco quando del porcil si schiude.  
L' una giunse a Capocchio, ed in sul nodo  
Del collo l' assannò sì che, tirando  
Grattar gli fece il ventre al fondo sodo.  
E l' Aretin, che rimase tremando,  
Mi disse: Quel folletto è Gianni Schicchi,  
E va rabbioso altrui così conciando.<sup>1</sup>*

But furies, Theban or of Troy, not then  
Nor were ever seen in so fell a kind,  
Goading even beasts, much less the limbs of men,  
As in two ghosts that I saw rushing by,  
Naked and pale, and snapping as they sprang,  
Mad as a boar pig let loose from the sty.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXX, 22-34.

<sup>2</sup> Parsons translates 'shut out.' I have corrected his translation to 'let loose,' because that is what 'si schiude' means.

One in Capocchio's neck-joint stuck his fang,  
 Dragging him down, until his belly grated  
 The solid bottom, while the Aretine  
 Exclaimed to me, as trembling he awaited,  
 'Yon sprite's Gian Schicchi; with such frenzied mien  
 He ranges round, assaulting this poor pack.'

— PARSONS.

This is neither a wild boar, nor a demoniacal swine, but rather a wild domestic hog, half-starved and rushing, when once liberated from the torture of the sty, out upon anything that may stop its hunger. This hog runs madly biting. Gianni Schicchi, the sprite, has the fury of a wild boar.

Boar-hunting, like falconry, was a pastime (then more than now) of lords and kings.<sup>1</sup> Philip the Fair of France, the counterfeiting king, fell from his horse which had been scared by a wild boar, and shortly thereafter he<sup>2</sup> died. In the great book of Doom's Day, says Dante,—

Shall be seen the woe that on the Seine  
 He brings by falsifying of the coin;  
 Who by the blow of a wild boar shall die.

— LONGFELLOW.

*Lì si vedrà lo duol che sopra Senna  
 Induce falseggiando la moneta,  
 Quei che morrà di colpo di cotenna.*<sup>3</sup>

In the region of Hell assigned to the Suicides, whose spirits are scattered there in trunks and saplings at the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the book of *King Modus and Queen Racio* (feuilletts XXXI–XXXVIII).

<sup>2</sup> GIOVANNI VILLANI, *Cron.* IX, 66.

<sup>3</sup> *Parad.* XIX, 118–120. The word 'cotenna' properly means not the hog, but his hide.

whim of Fortune, the poet witnessed a wild hunt like that of the boar, but it was fleeing spirits pursued by demoniacal hounds. 'We were still attentive to the trunk, believing that it might wish to say more to us, when we were surprised by an uproar, as one who perceives the wild boar and the chase coming toward his stand, and hears the beasts and the branches crashing.'<sup>1</sup> — NORTON.

Thus the expected attributes of the swine appear. He is still the 'abomination.' No downfall could be worse than, like him, to wallow in the mire. He typifies, though vaguely, wild anger and gluttony,<sup>2</sup> is a symbol of boundless lust, and lends his tusks to a demon.

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XIII, 109-114. Cf. VIRGIL, *Æn.* X, 107 ff. :—

'Ac velut ille canum, morsu de montibus altis  
Actus aper, multos Vesulus quem pinifer annos  
Defendit multosve palus Laurentia, silva  
Pastus harundinea,' etc.

Cf. also Ovid, *Met.* VIII, 284 ff., for description of a demoniacal boar. Dante's swine (except the swinish element of Ciriatto) are in no case demoniacal, as Da Prato seems to maintain. Cf. DA PRATO, *Il carattere demoniaco del Porco e del Cinghiale nell' Inferno Dantesco, nell' Egizia e nella Tradizione Popolare*, Castelyetro, 1898. There are no hogs and no wild boars in Dante's *Inferno*. Dante merely refers to them. Dante's wild boar hunt vaguely recalls another line or two in Virgil :—

'Sæpe volutabris pulsos silvestribus apros  
Latratu turbabis agens.'

— *Georg.* III, 411.

and

'Aut spumantis apri cursum clamore prementem.'

— *Æn.* I, 324.

<sup>2</sup> Ciacco, whom Dante puts among the gluttons in Circle III, *Inf.* VI, may have been so nicknamed because he was a 'hog.' Buti (1324-1406) says, 'Ciacco dicono alquanti che è nome di porco.' Buti was a Pisan, and therefore may not have known all the popular

expressions of Florence. According to BUONARROTI, *La Fiera* (II, 3), 'Ciaccio vale porco dal far col grugno ciacche, ciacche, in mangiando e schiacciando la ghianda. . . .' Dante may have called this glutton 'Ciaccio' vaguely to suggest the swine. The poet might have done this, and yet respect the man for his good attributes, just as he reveres Brunetto Latini, yet puts him in a lower place in Hell for a vice still more detestable than gluttony. On the other hand, the expression seems scarcely to have caught the eye of the oldest commentators, who would probably have noted the fact had the word 'Ciaccio' strongly suggested the 'hog.' Perhaps Ciaccio is a colourless nickname from Giacopo. Gelli, in the year 1554(?), lez. 5, vol. I, p. 383, thus commentates, 'Voi, cittadini, mi chiamaste Ciaccio; la qual parola significa che uno sia sporco, ingordo, e che non faccia distinzione alcuna nel mangiare; per la qual cosa si chiamano ancor qualche volta nella lingua nostra ciacchi i porci.' To my thinking, Dante meant 'Ciaccio' to suggest 'hog.'

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE SHEEP

IN the sacred books of the Hebrews, who were mostly herdsmen during antiquity, allusions to sheep abound. From the flocks and the shepherds their poets and moralising chroniclers drew many a beautiful thought. Nevertheless, the ancient Hebrews have not manifested in their surviving literature any heartfelt affection for sheep or any other animal, and it is therefore curious that Christ should in the New Testament have been symbolised as the Lamb of God.<sup>1</sup> Yet he was so symbolised, and the symbol, more favoured than that of the panther and the griffin,<sup>2</sup> has survived in literature, painting, plastic art, and popular tradition, for eighteen hundred years.

Dante of course accepts the tradition of the Lamb,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John i, 29, 36.

<sup>2</sup> See chapters on 'Panther,' p. 132 ff., and 'Griffin,' p. 224 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* XVI, 16-21: —

'Io sentii voci, e ciascuna pareva  
Pregar, per pace e per misericordia,  
L' Agnel di Dio che le peccata leva,  
Pure Agnus Dei eran le loro esordia:  
Una parola in tutte era ed un modo,  
Sì che pareva tra esse ogni concordia.'

Buti says, 'They sang the three Agnus Dei that are sung at mass; that is, "Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis; Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis; Agnus Dei,



but his genuine attitude toward sheep is to dislike them, for the sheep embody precisely those traits which aroused Dante's anger. Save in his softer moods, he hates them as if there were a feud between his ever conscious intelligence and their never ceasing stupidity. It is the poet, the seer of nature, who draws from their lowly existence several charming scenes, — charming because they are in every detail true to life.

*Come le pecorelle escon del chiuso  
Ad una, a due, a tre, e l' altre stanno  
Timidette atterrando l' occhio e il muso ;  
E ciò che fa la prima, e l' altre fanno,  
Addossandosi a lei s' ella s' arresta,  
Semplici e quete, e lo 'mperche non sanno :  
Sì vid' io muovere a venir la testa  
Di quella mandria fortunata allotta,  
Pudica in faccia, e nell' andare onesta.<sup>1</sup>*

Like sheep that issue from their fold, one, two,  
Then three at once ; the rest all standing shy,  
With eye and nostril to the ground, that do  
Then what the foremost doth, unknowing why,  
And crowd upon her back if she but stand  
(Quiet and simple creatures !), thus the head  
I saw move toward us of the happy band,  
Modest in face and of a comely tread.

— PARSONS.

qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.”” *Parad.* XXIV,  
1-3 : —

‘ O sodalizio eletto alla gran cena  
Del benedetto Agnello, il qual vi ciba  
Sì che la vostra voglia è sempre piena.’

Cf. *Apoc.* vii, 16, 17 ; *Parad.* XVII, 31-33 ; *Epist.* VII, ii, 43-46.  
With the above passages cf. *John* i, 29.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* III, 79-87.

Elsewhere the dismay of Virgil reminds Dante of a poor swain who, looking out upon the land, white with hoar frost,

Smites on his thigh, returning to his cot,  
And wanders here and there complaining round,  
Poor wretch ! unknowing how to mend his lot,  
Then, sallying out again, his hope revives  
To see how soon the world has changed its face,  
And catching up his crook, his flock he drives  
To their old pasture with a cheerful pace.<sup>1</sup>

— PARSONS.

Again, in the Heaven of the Moon, Beatrice (who remembers not only the classics and the Scriptures, but also Dante's observations) gives a pretty warning : —

*Non fate come agnel che lascia il latte  
Della sua madre, e semplice e lascivo  
Seco medesimo a suo piacer combatte.*<sup>2</sup>

Be not as the lamb that doth abandon  
Its mother's milk, and frolicsome and simple,  
Combats at its own pleasure with itself.

— LONGFELLOW.

It is in a slightly different mood that Dante refers to his childhood in Florence : —

*Se mai continga che il poema sacro,  
Al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra,  
Sì che m' ha fatto per più anni macro,  
Vinca la crudeltà, che fuor mi serra  
Del bello ovile ov' io dormii agnello*

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXIV, 7-15.

<sup>2</sup> *Parad.* V, 82-84. Cf. Scartazzini on vs. 83.

*Nimico ai lupi che gli danno guerra ;<sup>1</sup>  
 Con altra voce omai, con altro vello  
 Ritornero poeta, ed in sul fonte  
 Del mio battesimo prenderò il capello.<sup>2</sup>*

If e'er it happen that the Poem sacred,  
 To which both heaven and earth have set their hand,  
 So that it many a year hath made me lean,  
 O'ercome the cruelty that bars me out  
 From the fair sheepfold, where a lamb I slumbered,  
 An enemy to the wolves that war upon it,  
 With other voice forthwith, with other fleece  
 Poet will I return, and at my font  
 Baptismal will I take the laurel crown.

— LONGFELLOW.

And in the Heaven of Mars Dante asks his forebear Cacciaguida to tell him of the sheepfold of St. John, meaning Florence.<sup>3</sup>

Though Dante refers to himself as the 'least among the sheep of Christ,'<sup>4</sup> and though he accepts the lamb as the symbol of Jesus Christ, he does so in obedience to an honoured conventionality, rather than to express an

<sup>1</sup> Dante probably means, 'where I slept as a lamb and now I am a foe of the wolves,' etc. As a child he would scarcely have been 'nimico ai lupi.'

<sup>2</sup> *Parad.* XXV, 1-9.

<sup>3</sup> *Parad.* XVI, 25-27:—

'Ditemi dell' ovil di San Giovanni  
 Quanto era allora, e chi eran le genti  
 Tra esso più degne di più alti scanni.'

Scartazzini cites G. Villani (IV, 10), 'Il Duomo fu il primo ovile e stazzo della rifatta Firenze.'

<sup>4</sup> *Epist.* VIII, v, 70-74, 'Quippe de ovibus pascuis Jesu Christi minima una sum; quippe nulla pastoralis auctoritate abutens, quia divitiæ mecum non sunt.'

affection which he did not feel. The descriptions in his Latin eclogues hardly ring true, for there he is imitating Virgil as Virgil had already imitated Theokritos; but Dante's pastorals are marred by excessive allegory.<sup>1</sup> In two moods Dante is most himself: when he portrays what he has seen, and when he utters his loves and hatreds with all his heart. What could be more magnificently scornful than his comparison of the silly people, who listen to the idle tales of the priests, to sheep that come home fed on wind?

<sup>1</sup> *Ecl.* I, 58-64 (Mopsus = Giovanni del Virgilio): —

'Est mecum, quam nosis, ovis gratissima, dixi,  
Ubera vix quæ ferre potest, tam lactis abundans,  
(Rupe sub ingenti carptas modo ruminat herbas)  
Nulli iuncta gregi, nullis assuetaque caulis,  
Sponte venire solet, numquam vi poscere mulctram.  
Hanc ego præstolor manibus mulgere paratis;  
Hac implebo decem missurus vascula Mopso.'

'I have, said I, a pet ewe (you know her), that can scarce carry her milk-laden udders (and now she is chewing wisps of grass under a huge rock). Being put with no flock, unused to any fold, she is wont to come of her own will, and is never driven to the pail. I am waiting to milk her with ready hands, and shall have ten bowlfuls to send to Mopsus.' (This 'ewe' may be Dante's inspiration for the *Divine Comedy*, and the ten bowls full may be ten cantos of the *Paradise*. The ewe comes willingly because the inspiration is genuine and in the Italian tongue.) *Ecl.* II, 10-11: —

'Et dum silvestri pecudes mistæque capellæ  
Insidunt herbæ, dum naribus aëra captant,' etc.

'And while the sheep and goats lie mingled on the wood grass, while they sniff in the airs,' etc. Cf. *Ecl.* II, 72, and 92: —

'Virgiferi silvis gelida cum valle relictis,  
Post pecudes rediere suas: hirtæque capellæ,' etc.

'The herdsmen with their rods having left the woods and the chilly vale, followed their sheep and the hairy goats,' etc.

*Non ha Fiorenza tanti Lapi e Bindi,  
 Quante sî fatte favole per anno  
 In pergamo si gridan quinci e quindi;<sup>1</sup>  
 Sî che le pecorelle, che non sanno,  
 Tornan dal pasco pasciute di vento  
 E non le scusa non veder lor danno.<sup>2</sup>*

Florence has not so many Lapi and Bindi  
 As fables such as these, that every year  
 Are shouted from the pulpit back and forth,  
 In such wise that the lambs, who do not know,  
 Come back from pasture fed upon the wind,  
 And not to see the harm doth not excuse them.

— LONGFELLOW.

Here the axe is double-edged; elsewhere the poet strikes without irony. Of those who follow thoughtlessly Dante declares: 'These are to be called sheep, not men; for, if one sheep threw itself from a bank a thousand feet downward, all the others would go after it. And, if a sheep for any reason jumps, on its way, all the others jump, even though they see nothing to jump over. Yes, once I saw many jump into a well, because of one that jumped in, taking, it may be, the well for a wall, even though the shepherd, weeping and shouting, tried to hold them back with arms and breast.'<sup>3</sup> The present writer vividly remembers seeing human

<sup>1</sup> See T. F. CRANE, *The Exempla of Jacques de Vitry*, London, 1890, especially p. lxxviii. The people fed on these tales, and were therefore like sheep that go to pasture but get only 'wind.'

<sup>2</sup> *Parad.* XXIX, 103-108.

<sup>3</sup> *Conv.* I, xi, 58-70. This is one of the few cases in which Dante acknowledges his personal observation. Medievals are generally sparing in this regard. Mandeville can never be trusted; Dante always.



beings go to their death in a like manner on the East River Bridge.

Elsewhere in his Banquet Dante says that to live means to think, and thinking belongs only to man, because the beasts have no reason, and not only the lesser beasts but those that have 'a human demeanour and the spirit of a sheep or of some other abominable beast.'<sup>1</sup> And again he cries, 'Happy the few who sit at that table where the bread of the Angels is eaten, and wretched they who with the sheep have a common food.'<sup>2</sup>

One need hardly cite more to make Dante's attitude clear. He accepts the symbolism of the Lamb of God, and develops in a dozen ways the figure of speech that makes 'flocks'<sup>3</sup> out of the congregations of the Church, once even calling the Emperor a Hectorean

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* II, vii, 30-33, 'E non dico pur delle minori bestie, ma di quelle che hanno apparenza umana, e spirito di pecora o d'altra bestia abbominevole.' Cf. the Biblical 'abomination' — the hog.

<sup>2</sup> *Conv.* I, i, 51-54, 'Oh beati que' pochi che seggono a quella mensa ove il pane degli Angeli si mangia, e miseri quelli che colle pecore hanno comune cibo.' Cf. the legend of Nebuchadnezzar.

<sup>3</sup> *Epist.* VIII, iv, 46-49, 'Et quorum sequentem gregem per saltus peregrinationis huius illustrare intererat, ipsum una vobiscum ad præcipitium traduxistis.' *Parad.* IX, 127-132 (cf. Matthew vii, 15): —

'La tua citta, che di colui è pianta  
Che pria volse le spalle al suo fattore,  
E di cui è la invidia tanto pianta,  
Produce e spande il maledetto fiore  
C' ha disviate le pecore e gli agni,  
Perocchè fatto ha lupo del pastore.'

*Parad.* X, 94-96: —

'Io fui degli agni della santa greggia  
Che Domenico mena per cammino,  
U' ben s'impingua se non si vaneggia.'

*De Mon.* III, xv, 16-26; *ibid.* III, iii, 116-118; *Parad.* XI, 99 (Archimandrita); *De Mon.* III, ix, 123 (Archimandrita); *Epist.* VIII, vi

Shepherd;<sup>1</sup> but in his most natural moods Dante is either the artist who paints the sheep with a certain tenderness, or the great thinker, conscious always of his power and intolerant of stupidity in sheep<sup>2</sup> as in men.

(nomine solo archimandritis, etc.); *Purg.* XIX, 107; *Epist.* VII, 157-162 (neighbouring flocks sickened by contagion); *Epist.* VII, 144-146, 'hæc est languida pecus, gregem domini sui sua contagione commaculans.' *Parad.* XI, 124-132 (St. Francis describes the condition of the Dominicans in 1300 A.D.): —

'Ma il suo peculio di nuova vivanda  
È fatto ghiotto sì ch'esser non puote  
Che per diversi salti non si spanda;  
E quanto le sue pecore remote  
E vagabonde più da esso vanno  
Più tornan al ovil di latte vote.  
Ben son di quelle che temono il danno,  
E stringonsi al pastor; ma son sì poche,  
Che le cappe fornisce poco panno.'

Cf. Isaiah liii, 6; also Psalm cxix, 176.

Another reference to sheep is found in *Epist.* VII, v, 98-100, '... in Turnos ubique sicut leo desæviet, et in Latinos velut agnus mitescet.' Cf. *Parad.* XVI, 117 (com' agnel si placa); *Purg.* XXXIII, 51. See H. F. Tozer.

<sup>1</sup> *Epist.* V, v, 84-87, 'Parcite, parcite iam ex nunc, o carissimi, qui mecum iniuriam passi estis, ut Hectoreus pastor vos oves de ovili suo cognoscat,' etc.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle has also something to say on the stupidity of sheep. See *De Hist. Animal.* IX, 3 (De genere ovili amente et stulto), and cf. also ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De Animal.* lib. XXII, tract ii, cap. 1. Albertus Magnus is not only friendly to the sheep, but gives a minute and relatively intelligent description, apparently from his own observation. Cf. *Parad.* V, 80, with *Inf.* XXVI, 119.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE GOAT

‘COMEDY,’ explains Dante to Can Grande, ‘differs materially from tragedy in this, that tragedy is at the beginning wondrous and quiet; at the end or outcome stinking and grisly; and it is named, therefore, from *tragus*, which means he-goat, and *oda*; as it were a goatish song,—that is to say, stinking, like a he-goat, as is plainly shown by Seneca’s tragedies.’<sup>1</sup>

Being entirely ignorant of Greek, our author no doubt found this etymological lore in some Latin writer and made it bodily his own.<sup>2</sup> As Hell, which is the culmination of evil, sends forth a stench, so tragedy, which ends unhappily, smells ill. One thinks of Hamlet’s saying as to Denmark.

Not only is the he-goat rank; he is also a quarrelsome ‘butter’ (to translate his Hebrew name),<sup>3</sup> and in

<sup>1</sup> *Epist.* X, x, 195–203, ‘Differt ergo a tragœdia in materia per hoc, quod tragœdia in principio est admirabilis et quieta, in fine sive exitu est foetida et horribilis, et dicitur propter hoc a *tragus*, quod est hircus, et *oda*, quasi cantus hircinus, id est foetidus ad modum hirci, ut patet per Senecam in suis Tragœdiis.’

<sup>2</sup> HORACE (*Ars. P.* 220 ff.) is not sufficiently precise to be the authority of Dante. Horace says:—

‘Carmine qui tragico vilem certavit ob hircum,  
Mox etiam agrestes satyros nudavit,’ etc.

Dante almost certainly borrowed the explanation about as it stands.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Tayish,’ Proverbs xxx, 29, 31, and elsewhere.

this capacity is like two brothers whom Dante saw in the ice hell:—

‘Clamp never girt board to board so strongly; wherefore they like two he-goats butted together, such anger overcame them.’ — NORTON.

*Con legno legno mai spranga non cinse  
Forte così, ond' ei, come due becchi,  
Cozzaro insieme: tant' ira li vinse.*<sup>1</sup>

The nature of the he-goat is to butt, and butt often; that of all the breed is to climb along narrow ledges without ever falling, and stand on any point wide enough to hold their nimble, sharp-pointed hoofs. Since a mere chink or rift in an almost perpendicular wall is wide enough for goats, one can have but the greater admiration for the shade of Virgil, which set our poet down on a ledge that would have been to very goats no easy road.

*Che sarebbe alle capre duro varco.*<sup>2</sup>

This does well for a comparison, but in beauty is surpassed by another scene.

Dante, Master Virgil, and Statius stop to rest on the mountain of Purgatory to await the morning.

*Quali si fanno ruminando manse  
Le capre, state rapide e proterve  
Sopra le cime, avanti che sien pranse,  
Tacite all' ombra, mentre che il sol ferve,  
Guardate dal pastor, che in sulla verga*

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXXII, 49-51. This simile seems to have been foreshadowed by vss. 44-45.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XIX, 132. Compare with this the climbing of the mountain in *Purg.* XXV, 7-9.

*Poggiato s' è, e lor poggiato serve ;  
 E quale il mandrian che fuori alberga,  
 Lungo il peculio suo queto pernotta,  
 Guardando perchè fiera non lo sperga ;  
 Tali eravamo tutti e tre allotta,  
 Io come capra, ed ei come pastori,  
 Fasciati quindi e quinci d' alta grotta.  
 Poco potea parer lì del di fuori ;  
 Ma per quel poco vedev' io le stelle,  
 Di lor solere e più chiare e maggiori.  
 Sì ruminando, e sì mirando in quelle,  
 Mi prese il sonno ; il sonno che sovente,  
 Anzi che il fatto sia, sa le novelle.<sup>1</sup>*

Even as in ruminating passive grow  
 The goats that have been swift and venturesome  
 Upon the mountain tops ere they were fed  
 Hushed in the shadow, while the sun is hot,  
 Watched by the herdsman, who upon his staff  
 Is leaning, and in leaning tendeth them ;  
 And as the shepherd, lodging out of doors  
 Passes the night beside his quiet flock,  
 Watching that no wild beasts may scatter it ;  
 Such at that hour were we, all three of us,  
 I like the goat, and like the herdsman they, ,  
 Begirt on this side and on that by rocks.  
 Little could there be seen of things without ;  
 But through that little I beheld the stars  
 More luminous and larger than their wont.  
 Thus ruminating, and beholding these,

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XXVII, 76-93. Cf. 80-84 with *VIRGIL, Georg.* IV, 433-436 (cited by Scartazzini) : —

' Ipse velut stabuli custos in montibus olim  
 Vesper ubi e pastu vitulos ad tecta reducit,  
 Auditisque lupos acuunt balatibus agni,  
 Considit scopulo medius numerumque recenset.'



Sleep seized upon me, — sleep that oftentimes  
Before a deed is done has tidings of it.

— LONGFELLOW.

No ghost-haunted mountain of Purgatory is this, but some Italian hilltop where the goatherd is passing the summer with his flock. Bent mutely on his crook, he watches them all day alone, and at night he is their guardian against wolves.

Once more, in a Latin eclogue,<sup>1</sup> Dante limns the goat-herd propped on his knotty staff; but his name is Tityrus, and the illusion fades. Still worse, the suspicion of an underlying allegory, a possibility that these animals are only scholars after all, and that the herdsmen are men of letters thus travestied, lessens the reality of the scene, and its beauty dwindles.

*Tityrus*<sup>2</sup> *hæc propter confugit et Alpheſibæus*<sup>3</sup>  
*Ad ſilvam, pecudumque ſuique miſertus uterque*  
*Fraxineam, tiliis platanisque frequentem*  
*Et dum ſilveſtri pecudes miſtæque capellæ*  
*Inſidunt herbæ, dum naribus æëra captant,*  
*Tityrus heic annosus enim, deſenſus acerna*  
*Fronde, ſoporifero gravis incumbemat odore,*  
*Nodoſoque piri vulſo de ſtirpe bacillo*  
*Stabat ſubnixus ut diceret Alpheſibæus.*<sup>4</sup>

‘So Tityrus and Alpheſibæus, each thoughtful for his flock, have fled to an aſh wood, grown with plane trees and lindens; and whiſt the mingled ſheep and goats ſettle down on the ſward in the woodland and

<sup>1</sup> Addreſſed to the pedant Giovanni del Virgilio.

<sup>2</sup> Dante.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Alpheſibæus, iſteſt Magiſter Fiduciſ de Milottiſ de Certaldo Mediciſ, qui tunc morabatur Ravennæ.’

<sup>4</sup> *Ecl.* II, 7–15.

sniff the breezes, here Tityrus, full of years, sheltered beneath the maple boughs, drowsy with the heavy odour, stood propped on a knotty rod that he had torn off a pear tree's stump, waiting for Alpheſibœus to have his say.'

In another Latin eclogue, sent as a response to the same pedantic poetaster, nature is smothered under the mantle of allegory:—

*Vidimus in nigris albo patiente lituris  
Pierio demulsa sinu modulamina nobis.  
Forte recensentes pastas de more capellas  
Tunc ego sub quercu meus et Melibœus<sup>1</sup> eramus.<sup>2</sup>*

'We have beheld in black rubbings, on patient white leaves, ditties milked from the bosom of the Pierian muse. Counting, perchance, our goats, fed according to their wont, my Melibœus and I were standing beneath an oak.'

Tityrus, no doubt, is our own Dante, and Melibœus seems to hide one Dino Perini. Dante laughs at Melibœus's desire to learn the art of poesy:—

*Victus amore sui, posito vix denique risu,  
Stulte, quid insanis? inquam; tua cura capellæ  
Te potius poscunt, quamquam mala cœnula turbet.<sup>3</sup>*

'Out of pure liking for him, but having hardly ceased to laugh, I said, "What mad talk, my foolish one! Look out for the goats, they need you, though there's little food."''

Now Melibœus speaks: 'O Tityrus,' says he, 'if

<sup>1</sup> Dino Perini?

<sup>2</sup> *Ecl.* I, 1-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ecl.* I, 8-10.

Mopsus<sup>1</sup> sings in unknown pastures, an thou show me them, I may, nevertheless, recite his unknown songs to my wandering goats.'

*Tityre, tunc, si Mopsus, ait, decantat in herbis  
Ignotis, ignota tamen sua carmina possim,  
Te monstrante, meis vagulis prodiscere<sup>2</sup> capris.<sup>3</sup>*

Dante (or Tityrus) now tells Melibœus that he would rather wait for the laurel wreath on the bank of the Arno, whereat Melibœus replies:—

*Ille: Quis hoc dubitet? Propter quod respice tempus,  
Tityre, quam velox; nam iam senuere capellæ  
Quas concepturis dedimus nos matribus hircos.<sup>4</sup>*

'Who doubts it? So look to the days, Tityrus; how swift they are! For already the she-kids, for whose begetting we ourselves gave over the he-goats to the mothers, have grown old.'

The Latin text, like the allegory, has perhaps undergone the injuries of time. Yet we seem to have lost a

<sup>1</sup> Giovanni del Virgilio.

<sup>2</sup> Neither Forcellini nor other lexicographers register such a word. So skilled a Latinist as Dante would hardly have ventured to coin '*prodiscere*.' If the scribe who is responsible for '*prodiscere*' was a Tuscan he might very naturally have put an *s* into *prodicere*. To pronounce *ci* much like *sci* (*dicere* like *discere*) is characteristic of modern Florentines, and perhaps was so of Dante's contemporaries. *Prodicere* would fit here without violence to sense or to prosody. The suggestion of *prodicere* I owe to Professor M. L. Earle, of Columbia University.

<sup>3</sup> *Ecl.* I, 24-26.

<sup>4</sup> *Ecl.* I, 45-47. Witte and Kannegiesser loosely render thus:—

'Es altern schon die Ziegen, die den Böcken  
Wir überliessen, dass sie Mütter würden.'

few details of our poet's life and thought rather than a picture of nature.

Once more, what can Dante mean when he warns Melibœus to look out for his wanton he-goats? —

*Tu tamen interdum capros meditere petulcos.*<sup>1</sup>

The phrase, if allegorical, seems hopelessly obscure. So, too, other verses in the second eclogue to Giovanni del Virgilio, wherein Dante says that, when the shadows had deepened, the staff-bearing swains came homeward behind their flocks, and the hairy goats, now making back to the soft meadows, went on before: —

*Sed quia tam proni scindebant æthra iugales,  
Ut rem quamque sua iam multum vinceret umbra,  
Virgiferi silvis gelida cum valle relictis,  
Post pecudes rediere suas : hirtæque capellæ<sup>2</sup>  
Inde, velut reduces ad mollia prata præibant.*<sup>3</sup>

The two eclogues containing these passages have not only, in all likelihood, been garbled by puzzled scribes, but they are further obscured by the excessive allegory, which no commentators have made clear. Yet an understanding of the allegory in every line (if the allegory is thorough) would serve only to destroy what semblance of illusion is afforded us by our inability to perceive precisely what human beings are intended by these goats in their various postures and moods. There is, then, a slight semblance of nature without illusion, but one may be forgiven the inability to admire. If, on

<sup>1</sup> *Ecl.* I, 65.

<sup>2</sup> Giovanni del Virgilio (*Ecl.* II, vs. 23) first uses the words *hirtæque capellæ*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ecl.* II, 90–95.

the other hand, the poet moralises without any artistic aim, there is no artistic disappointment. 'He who knows anything in general' (writes Dante), 'does not know it perfectly, for he who recognises an animal from afar does not know whether it is a dog, or a wolf, or a he-goat.'<sup>1</sup> The example is quaint and appeals.

Again, the he-goat figures in a proverb *Lungi fia dal becco l' erba* (far from the goat shall be the grass);<sup>2</sup> in other words, 'he may crave, but he will go unfed.'

What Dante believes to be the doom of goats is obvious from his apostrophe to evil-doers at the bottom of Hell:—

*O sopra tutte mal creata plebe,  
Che stai nel loco onde 'l parlar è duro  
Me' foste state qui pecore o zebe!*<sup>3</sup>

O rabble ill-begotten above all,  
Who 're in the place to speak of which is hard,  
'Twere better ye had here been sheep or goats.

— LONGFELLOW.

That death ends all for the beasts, but for man is only a door into the bliss or torture of eternity, such is the belief of Dante,—a belief unshaken by the doubt that harassed Ecclesiastes.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* I, vi, 40-45.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XV, 72. H. F. Tozer translates, 'becco' 'mouth,' lit. 'beak.' See his commentary.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXXII, 13-15. *Zeba* (a rare word, now obsolete) is from the German *Zibbe*, lamb. *Zebellare*, 'to skip,' is probably from *zeba*.

<sup>4</sup> Ecclesiastes iii, 18-22.



## CHAPTER XXV

### THE DEER — LA DAMA

*Sì si starebbe un cane intra due dame.*<sup>1</sup>

Thus would a dog falter between two deer.

HOWEVER often or knowingly other medieval writers describe the deer in verse and prose, Dante mentions the creature only once, and then so indifferently that any other four-footed quarry would have done as well. The word *dame* is either a dubious Latinism or dubiously archaic Italian, and seems to have been used because the poet needed something to rime with *fame* and *brame*. There is no question here of art or observation,<sup>2</sup> and the only point of interest would be to learn why Dante took it upon himself to spell the word with a single *m*, an orthography contrary to the perhaps universal usage of Italian authors, both ancient and modern.

Two texts, amongst others, may have led Dante to write this verse,

*Sì si starebbe un cane intra due dame.*<sup>3</sup>

Thus would a dog falter between two deer.

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* IV, 6.

<sup>2</sup> The only question involved is scholastic and is treated in the chapter on 'The Dog,' p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> Three explanations seem to offer themselves as to why Dante spelt *dame* with one *m*: First, there existed a form *dama*,—the form preferred by Forcellini. (It is *damus* that gives the

In Virgil's *Georgics* III, 539-540:

*Timidi dammæ cervique fugaces  
Nunc interque canes et circum tecta vagantur,*

we have both dogs and deer. Again, in *Ecl.* VIII, 28, dogs and deer are both brought together: —

*Cum canibus timidi venient ad pocula dammæ.*

French *dain* and *daim*.) Second, it may be that Dante found the word written DAMÆ in some manuscript and failed to notice the bar over the M; or, on the other hand, it may be that, having found the word written DAMAE, he felt a right to use the form with one M. Since this book aims to study Dante as a student of nature rather than to study etymologies, the question may well be left for another time. See, however, MEYER-LÜBKE, *Einführung in das Studium der Romanischen Sprachwissenschaft*, § 91.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE BEAVER

*Une beste est d'autre nature ;  
Castor la nomme l' escripture,  
En roman l'apele l' an beivre.<sup>1</sup>*

IN order to describe how Geryon, the monstrous symbol of fraud, looked, as he lay with his goodly human face above a certain brink in Hell, but with his serpent's body hanging down into the abyss, Dante employs an image that makes the uncouth scene loom up like a vision of a real world.

*Come tal volta stanno a riva i burchi,  
Che parte sono in acqua e parte in terra,  
E come là tra li Tedeschi lurchi  
Lo bevero s'assetta a far sua guerra ;  
Così la fiera pessima si stava  
Sull' orlo che, di pietra, il sabbion serra.<sup>2</sup>*

As sometimes wherries lie upon the shore,  
That part are in the water, part on land ;  
And as among the guzzling Germans there,  
The beaver plants himself to wage his war ;  
So that vile monster lay upon the border,  
Which is of stone and shutteth in the sand.

— LONGFELLOW.

<sup>1</sup> GERVAISE, *Bestiaire*, edited by Paul Meyer, *Romania*, I, p. 435 ff., 'A beast there is of another kind, — castor he is named by Holy Writ ; in the Romance tongue they call him beivre' (from the German *Biber*).

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XVII, 19-24.

In the Middle Ages the beaver was thought of chiefly as the animal that bore in a certain part of its body a medicine named castorium. On this account, so the story goes, he was pursued by hunters; but, knowing their purpose, he bit off the medicinal part and thus saved his life. This dubious tale was no doubt familiar to Dante, for it is related by Pliny,<sup>1</sup> by the widely diffused 'Physiologus,'<sup>2</sup> by Brunetto Latini,<sup>3</sup> and a host of others needless to mention here. Dante has escaped this legend, but he has adopted another quite as extraordinary. He believes that the beaver fishes with its tail.

Though Dante does not explain what he means by the beaver's warfare, his earliest commentators are quick to catch the allusion, and make the matter clear to such of their readers as were not versed in the beaver's outlandish ways. Scarcely seven years after Dante's death Jacopo della Lana enlightened other lovers of the poet in this wise:—

'The beaver is an animal that lives on fish, and he is of small growth and abides mostly in the lowlands where there are fish. Now this animal, when he wishes to feed, is wont to come to the water's edge, and one half he stretches upon the earth, the other half into the water, and he has a very broad tail which is full of fat. He waggles the aforesaid tail in the water, the fat oozes out through the pores and greases all the water, quite as if oil had been thrown in. The fish, perceiving such a moisture, hastens thither; the beaver stands ready, seizes

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Nat.* VIII, 47.

<sup>2</sup> For texts see CAHIER ET MARTIN, *Mélanges d'Archéologie*, II, pp. 228–232.

<sup>3</sup> *Tresor*, p. 232.

him, and eats him. And this happens in those parts of Allemania above the river called Danube, which flows into the Tana sea.'<sup>1</sup>

Dante's own son, Pietro, tells a similar tale,<sup>2</sup> to be read also in the 'Glosses' (*Chiose*, 1321? or 1328?)<sup>3</sup> and in the commentary of Benvenuto da Imola. Not only have we this contemporary testimony, but the evidence that this tail-fishing myth is a far-reaching bit of folklore is convincing; for the feat which Dante attributes to the beaver is simply another version of a myth existing in Africa, Europe, and America to this day. Whether the fisher be a stag or a hyena, a bear, a wolf, or a rabbit, it is ever the same misunderstanding of nature, arising in a similar way.<sup>4</sup>

Dante's version indicates not that he had ever observed the beaver, 'there amidst the gluttonous Teutons,' but rather that he knew of it only by hearsay or through some other channel to us unknown.

<sup>1</sup> See commentary of J. DELLA LANA, and WITTE, *Dante-Forschungen*, I, 372.

<sup>2</sup> *Super Dantis ipsius genitoris Comoediam commentarium*, . . . Florentiae, 1846.

<sup>3</sup> Edited by FR. SELMI, Turin, 1865.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. TYLOR, *Early Hist. of Mankind*, pp. 364-367. The ability and the inclination to observe nature have grown very slowly, and the experimental spirit had not really gained a solid footing till well into the last century. The Bible, Aristotle, and St. Thomas Aquinas (to name a typical theologian) and other like authorities, were once the world's eye and are the scientific advisers of many people still.



## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE OTTER

WHEN medieval hunters went out for otter, they and their dogs set out in early morning to some fishy stream. Having made their quests, the hunters breakfasted, then armed themselves each with a fork fitted to a shaft as long as a great sword. About three shots of a crossbow away from the point where the otter had been started the dogs were let go; they sped to the otter's lair, and began scratching and baying. The hunters meanwhile coming up, stood ready, and, immediately on seeing the otter swim away beneath the surface, cast their forked spears. Perhaps then the dogs retrieved, perhaps the otter was dragged out with the fork or trident on which he was impaled.<sup>1</sup>

Dante makes use of such a scene, but his hunters are devils, and the otter is a politician smeared with pitch.

*Io vidi, ed anco il cor me n' accapriccia,  
Uno aspettar così, com' egli incontra  
Che una rana rimane, ed altra spiccia.  
E Graffiacan, che gli era più d' incontra  
Gli arroncigliò le impegolate chiome,  
E trassel su, che mi parve una lontra.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Book of King Modus and Queen Racio*, chapter entitled 'Cy devise en quelle maniere on prent le loutre a force'; also CIBRARIO, *Economia Pol. nel Med. Evo.*, Turin, 1892, vol. II, chapter 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XXII, 31-36. For excellent interpretation, see Benvenuto da Imola.

I witnessed then what thrills me yet with fear ;  
One, lingering longer with his head uplift,  
As one frog stays while darts the next away,  
Whom Graffiacane,<sup>1</sup> being nearest, hooked  
Forth by the tarry locks, a writhing prey ;  
Like a speared otter to my sight he looked.

— PARSONS.

Whoever has seen an otter come, long, dark, and dripping, out of the water, can easily imagine this tarry sinner caught and hauled out, squirming on the devil 'Dog-grabber's' <sup>1</sup> hooked spear. Dante had kept his eyes wide open on his medieval world.

<sup>1</sup> Graffiacane might here be nicknamed 'Graffialontra' were it not that Dante calls his sinners, not otters, but 'dogs.'

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE ELEPHANT

THE few elephants that were brought into Europe during the Middle Ages for king or emperor were not only so extraordinary a sight that people flocked to see them,<sup>1</sup> but they are even recorded solemnly in the chronicles. In 1228<sup>2</sup> the Sultan gave to Emperor Frederick II of Swabia an elephant which was to be seen in 1235 in Lombardy,<sup>3</sup> and in 1235 or 1237 at Parma.<sup>4</sup> Ryccardus de S. Germano writes<sup>5</sup> that the Archbishop of Panormo, coming back as an ambassador from the Sultan to the Emperor, proffered to the latter on the Sultan's behalf an elephant, some mules, and sundry other precious gifts. 'In 1235,' says the chronicler Salimbene, 'the Lord Emperor Frederick sent an elephant into Lombardy with many dromedaries and camels, and with many leopards and jerfalcons and goshawks. And they went through Parma, and I saw them with my own eyes, and they stopped in the city of Cremona.' There the elephant died in 1248, seventeen years before the birth of Dante.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> MATTHEW PARIS, ad ann. 1255.

<sup>2</sup> RYCCARDUS DE S. GERMANO, ad ann. 1228.

<sup>3</sup> SALIMBENE, cited by ALWIN SCHULTZ, *Das Höfische Leben*, I, 451.

<sup>4</sup> The confusion of dates arises from a possible discrepancy between Salimbene and the record in the *Annals of Parma* for May, 1237.

<sup>5</sup> Ad ann. 1228.

<sup>6</sup> *Ann. Placent. Guelfi*.

In 1255, according to the chronicle of Matthew Paris,<sup>1</sup> Louis IX of France sent to Henry III the first elephant that ever entered England. 'This was a great gift,' declares the chronicler, 'nor do we believe that ever any other elephant was seen in England, nor even in Cisalpine regions, save him; wherefore various folk flocked to see such a novelty.'

The mere silence of the chroniclers is strong evidence that no elephant was in Italy during Dante's time.<sup>2</sup> Whether the poet's lore was limited to tradition, or went deeper, we shall never be likely to learn. Dante refers to the elephant as a land animal, mighty like the leviathan of the sea, and, like him, helpless through lack of intelligence to do harm to men. Since a close acquaintance with elephants would probably have sent at least a ray of scepticism as to their lack of intelligence into the most hardened medieval dogmatist, it is likely that Dante took the elephant to symbolise, with the whale, nothing more than great bulk, strength, and lack of that intelligence which gives malice to giants and men.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ad ann. 1255.

<sup>2</sup> A miniature in a MS. of Marco Polo's travels shows an elephant hunt. The elephant is very like a mastodon. This MS., if I mistake not, is in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris.

<sup>3</sup> See paragraphs on the intelligence of lower animals, pp. 78-81.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE WHALE

AT least four hundred years before Dante, the Anglo-Saxons, bold seafarers and hunters then as now, in order to get the whalebone in which they dealt, sailed (so King Alfred tells us) to far northern seas.<sup>1</sup> To them, battling often in their little ships with the mightiest of living things, the whale must have been both actual and terrible.<sup>2</sup> No wonder they called the ocean his realm! <sup>3</sup>

In the literature of Southern Europe the great mammal is seldom mentioned. Notwithstanding the mediæval fondness for huge, mysterious things, he is not regularly a part of the fabulous lore of those times; yet Brunetto Latini, whose *Tresor* Dante praises, tells a tale<sup>4</sup> which smacks so strongly of folklore that it can reasonably be thought to represent an opinion current in Dante's time. 'Cetes,' he begins, 'est uns grans peissons que li plusor apelent balaine.' Brunetto goes

<sup>1</sup> See KING ALFRED'S *Version of Oros.*, *Voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan*, ed. by H. SWEET, Early English Text Society, vol. 79.

<sup>2</sup> See *Ælfric's Colloquy*, THORPE, 24, 15-22.

<sup>3</sup> *Hwæles ædel*, ANDREAS, KEMBLE, 548.

<sup>4</sup> *Tresor*, p. 186. Cf. PLINY, *N. H.* I, ix. Professor A. V. W. Jackson tells me that a somewhat similar story concerning a monster serpent occurs in the *Zend Avesta* (Yasna 9, 11), and from my friend Sándor L. Landeau I learn that he heard the tale in his childhood from the lips of peasants in Hungary.



on to say that this is a fish as big as an estate (*si grans comme une terre*). Often he is left high and dry because he can only go where the sea is very deep. This is the fish that took Jonah into his belly, as the story in the Old Testament tells us, so that he thought he had got into hell for the greatness of the place wherein he was. This fish lifts his back on the high seas and lingers so long in one spot that the winds bring sand and lay it over him. Grass and bushes sprout upon him, and the seamen, deceived by this, oft think him to be an isle, whereon they alight and, setting up stakes, kindle a fire. Now, when the fish feels the heat he cannot endure it; so he flees down into the sea and causes everything on him to be engulfed.

There is no likelihood that Dante, either, ever saw a whale. He simply mentions the creature along with the elephant as something huge, without intelligence to make it so terrible as the giants, of whom he says:—

*Natura certo, quando lasciò l'arte  
Di sì fatti animali, assai fe' bene  
Per torre tali esecutori a Marte:  
E s' ella d' elefanti e di balene  
Non si pente, chi guarda sottilmente  
Più giusta e più discreta la ne tiene:  
Chè dove l' argomento della mente  
S' aggiunge al mal volere ed alla possa  
Nessun riparo vi può far la gente.<sup>1</sup>*

Sure, Nature, when her hand forbore the skill  
To make such monsters, had a wise intent,  
Taking from Mars these ministers of ill;

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXXI, 49-57.

And if she do not of her whales repent,  
And elephants, who closely thinks will find  
That she herein a just discretion shows :  
For were ill will and strength gifted with mind,  
Vainly would men such argument oppose.

— PARSONS.

Though a comment on this passage by the Anonymous Florentine<sup>1</sup> is fair evidence that stranded whales were both a curiosity and a nuisance in his time, there is not the slightest warrant for thinking that Dante ever saw a whale. On the contrary, it is probable that the Giants (in whom he believed)<sup>2</sup> suggested to his mind the two other greatest things of land and sea. What he says of the elephant and the whale serves not only to heighten his description of the human monsters, but points a moral. This moral concerns man's relation to the 'noxious beasts.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> His commentary, largely a compilation, was edited by Pietro Fanfani; 1375 is the earliest date to which it can be assigned.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter on 'The Giants,' p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 21-23.

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE DOLPHIN

‘AMONG sea animals, too,’ writes Aristotle,<sup>1</sup> ‘many instances are related of the dolphin, and likewise of the love and attachment which it has shown to boys about Tarentum, Caria, and other places.’ The Stagirite goes on to say that dolphins have been known to leap over the masts of high ships.

Neither of these fables, oddly enough, is to be found in any accessible version of the ‘Physiologus’;<sup>2</sup> nevertheless, both were known to the Middle Ages. Isidor of Seville avers that ‘nothing in the ocean is swifter than the dolphins; for ofttimes, leaping in the seas, they fly over ships. When, moreover, they are rollicking in the billows and flinging themselves headlong in the masses of the waves, they seem to forebode storms.’<sup>3</sup>

Dante’s so-called master, Brunetto Latini, knew and relished the stories of Isidor, but in adopting them usually added something from other stores. What Brunetto says of the dolphin is of capital importance, for his very words bear a resemblance to those of Dante.

‘The dolphin,’ says he,<sup>4</sup> ‘is a great sea fish that fol-

<sup>1</sup> *De Hist. Animal.* lib. IX, cap. 48.

<sup>2</sup> The *Serra* is probably a distortion of the flying fish.

<sup>3</sup> *Etymol.* lib. XII, cap. vi, 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Tresor*, pp. 187-188.

lows the voice of men, and is the swiftest thing in the sea, for he skips clear over it as if he were flying; but he does not like to go alone; nay, many go together, and through them sailors perceive the storm that is to come, when they see the dolphin fleeing amid the sea and tumbling as he fleets, as if the thunderbolt were driving him.' — *Et par eulx aperçoivent li marinier la tempeste qui doit venir, quant il voient le dalphin fuir parmi la mer, et trebuchier soi en fuiant, comme se la foudre le chaçast.*

'And, sooth,' he goes on, 'we find in the olden stories that a country lad fed a dolphin on bread for a long time, and made him so tame that he rode him, and so much that the dolphin bore him out to the deep sea, and there he was drowned, and at last the dolphin pined and died when he found out the death of the child. Another in Iace (Jassy?), by Babylon, so loved a child that after he had played with him, and the merry child had run away, he tried to follow him, and stayed upon the strand, where he was caught. These and many other marvels are seen in these beasts for the love they bear to men.'

To prove that Dante ever watched the leaping dolphin, we should first have to demonstrate that he had been at some time well off shore or on the sea. This has never been shown, and though Dante, to describe a certain band of demons, declares he never saw a ship thus steer by sign from land or stars,<sup>1</sup> his other vivid

<sup>1</sup> 'Nè già con sì diversa cennamella  
Cavalier vidi mover, nè pedoni,  
Nè nave a segno di terra o di stella.'

— *Inf.* XXII, 10-12.

description of the sea is simply a line from Virgil, almost literally translated.<sup>1</sup>

To portray the jobbers whom he saw floundering in the boiling pitch, vainly trying to cool their torturing burns, Dante's mind reverts to the dolphins for an image of his sinners.

*Pure alla pegola era la mia intesa  
Per veder della bolgia ogni contegno,  
E della gente, ch' entro v' era incesa.  
Come i delfini quando fanno segno  
Ai marinar con l' arco della schiena,<sup>2</sup>  
Che s' argomentin di campar lor legno;  
Talor così ad alleggiar la pena  
Mostrava alcun dei peccatori il dosso,  
E nascondeva in men che non balena.<sup>3</sup>*

Ever upon the pitch was my intent,  
To see the whole condition of that Bolgia  
And of the people who therein were burned.  
Even as the dolphins, when they make a sign  
To mariners by arching of the back,  
That they should counsel take to save their vessel,  
Thus sometimes, to alleviate his pain,  
One of the sinners would display his back,  
And in less time conceal it than it lightens.

— LONGFELLOW.

<sup>1</sup> 'L' alba vinceva l' òra mattutina  
Che fuggia innanzi, sì che di lontano  
Conobbi il tremolar della marina.'

— *Purg.* I, 115-117.

Cf. VIRGIL, *Aen.* VI, 9, 'Splendet tremulo sub lumine pontus.'

<sup>2</sup> Cf. OVID, *Met.* II, 265-266: —

'Nec se super aequora curvi  
Tollere consuetas audent delphines in auras.'

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXII, 16-24.



Barring the vivid phrase *con l' arco della schiena*, there is nothing in Dante's description (but its beauty) that is not also in Brunetto Latini. Here, as so often elsewhere, Dante has known how to give to a mere literary reminiscence an energy that few writers can impart from the observation of actual life. This vitalising of monsters, or of other creatures he had probably never seen,<sup>1</sup> is a psychic phenomenon to be reckoned with by those who study Dante.

<sup>1</sup> Even as a sculptural adornment of churches, dolphins are exceedingly rare. A pair of them may be seen on a column of the church of Agliate in Lombardy. Cf. M. F. DE DARTEIN, *L' Architecture lombarde*, etc., for illustration. It is barely possible that Dante had seen dolphins or porpoises frolicking, as he stood on some high shore or headland. To my knowledge they rarely come so close to land that one could make out the *arco della schiena*. An article on Dante's dolphins in the *Atti del Real Istituto Veneto*, 1895-1896, serie 7, disp. 10, shows that the author had not understood the subjunctive *s' argomentin*, and is otherwise of dubious value.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE FROG

To conceive of the damned as frogs<sup>1</sup> was not new with Dante; for the writer of the Apocalypse, whose nightmare seems to have been fraught with a great many uncouth or loathsome beasts, saw 'three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.'<sup>2</sup> So, in the Book of Exodus (viii), demoniacal frogs plague Pharaoh. Rabanus Maurus affirms that the frogs are heretics, who, dwelling in the filth of the basest senses, never cease to croak with a vain garrulity.<sup>3</sup>

It is in the marsh of heretics that Dante sees more than a thousand destroyed souls flee before the rescuing angel,

*Come le rane innanzi alla nimica  
Biscia per l' acqua si dileguan tutte  
Fin che alla terra ciascuna s' abbica.*<sup>4</sup>

Just as the frogs before the hostile serpent  
Scatter through the water, every one,  
Till each is huddled on the ground.

<sup>1</sup> Dante uses, without differentiation, *rana* and *ranocchio* (which comes from *\*ranuculus*, as the French *grenouille* comes from *\*ranucula*).      <sup>2</sup> Rev. xvi, 13.      <sup>3</sup> *De Univ.* lib. VIII, cap. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* IX, 76-78: Virgil thus alludes to the *nimica biscia*:—

'Hic piscibus atram

Improbis ingluviem, ranisque loquacibus explet.'

The word *dileguan* renders by its very sound the liquidity of their flight. Could the poet ever have observed such an unusual sight in Maremma or elsewhere? Perhaps not, but there is not a jot of exaggeration in the imagery.

Again, precisely as the poet has described the beaver 'there amongst the guzzling Teutons' with its nose above the bank, so he describes the frogs, or rather the sinners, in the ice hell of the traitors. Only these frogs are croaking, whereas the beaver is still.

*E come a gracidar si sta la rana<sup>1</sup>  
Col muso fuor dell' acqua, quando sogna  
Di spigolar sovente la villana :  
Livide insin là dove appar vergogna,  
Eran l' ombre dolenti nella ghiaccia.<sup>2</sup>*

And as to croak the frog doth place himself  
With muzzle out of water, — when is dreaming  
Of gleaning oftentimes the peasant-girl,  
Livid, as far down as where shame appears,  
Were the disconsolate shades within the ice.

— LONGFELLOW.

<sup>1</sup> That this piping of the frogs occurs in breeding time is admirably shown by the words : —

‘ quando sogna  
Di spigolar sovente la villana.’

Rabanus Maurus says : ‘Ranæ a garrulitate vocatæ eo quod circa genitales strepunt paludes et sonum vocis importunis clamoribus reddunt. Ranæ dæmones. In Apocalypsi: Vidi de ore dragonis spiritus tres immundos in modum ranarum; sunt autem spiritus dæmoniorum. Ranæ hæretici, qui in cæno vilissimorum sensuum commorantes, vana garrulitate latrare non desinunt, ut in Exodo legitur.’ Cf. note 3. Cf. also VIRGIL, *Georg.* I, 378, ‘Et veterem in limo ranæ cecinere querelam.’

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XXXII, 31–35.

Again the poet is reminded of frogs by the sinners in the boiling pitch. Just as the frogs plunge under at the approach of a man, so the sinners rest with their faces out, and sink at the approach of Barbariccia, a demon.

The swimming jobbers are likened, first, to plunging dolphins, then, more artfully, to frogs.

*E come all' orlo dell' acqua d' un fosso  
Stanno i ranocchi pur col muso fuori,<sup>1</sup>  
Sì che celano i piedi e l' altro grosso;  
Sì stavan d' ogni parte i peccatori:  
Ma come s' appressava Barbariccia,  
Così si ritraean sotto i bolori.  
Io vidi, ed anco il cor me n' accapriccia,  
Uno aspettar così, com' egli incontra  
Che una rana rimane, ed altra spiccia.  
E Graffiacan, che gli era più d' incontra,  
Gli arroncigliò le impegolate chiome,  
E trassel su, che mi parve una lontra.<sup>2</sup>*

And just as frogs that stand, with noses out  
On a pool's margin, but beneath it hide  
Their feet and all their bodies but the snout,  
So stood the sinners there on every side.  
But soon as Barbariccia drew more near,  
Under the bubbles ducked they down full swift,  
I witnessed then what thrills me yet with fear;  
One, lingering longer with his head uplift,  
As one frog stays, while darts the next away,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 'Stanno i ranocchi pur col muso fuori,' with *Inf.* XXXII, 31-32:—

'Si sta la rana  
Col muso fuor dell' acqua,' etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XXII, 25-36.

Whom Graffiacan, being nearest, hooked  
Forth by the tarry locks, a writhing prey,  
Like a speared otter to my sight he looked.

— PARSONS.

Whatever may be said against Dante's fashion of comparing his sinners to dolphins, frogs, and a speared otter, so swiftly that the mind, full of one image, almost refuses to see another, or finally sees them pell-mell and rather dim, each image is in itself a gem. And in the frogs our poet has observed what most fitted his purpose — their amphibious attitude, their croaking, their abject fear and panic flight. No ransacking of the classics — and surely no search in Dante's contemporaries or in his immediate forerunners — is likely to bring forth so vivid a series of images from everyday nature. Each of these images serves to create an illusion, and gives reality to what would otherwise be mere words. Once only, but for a more didactic purpose, Dante borrows from literature rather than from life.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXIII, 4-9. See chapter on 'The Mouse,' pp. 138-140.



## CHAPTER XXXII

### THE FISH

ALBERTUS MAGNUS, in whom a tendency to experiment in natural science is felt at times, observed, or quotes some one who had observed, signs of intelligence in fish.<sup>1</sup> Dante, however, denies them intelligence in unmistakable terms.<sup>2</sup> It is mostly their picturesque qualities that arouse his interest. Even to a sign in the Zodiac<sup>3</sup> he contrives to give life. The sun is about to dawn on Easter, and is entering Aries, the Ram, when Master Virgil thus bids Dante hurry on:—

*Ma seguimi oramai, chè il gir mi piace ;  
Chè i Pesci guizzan su per l' orizzonta.*<sup>4</sup>

But follow, now, as I would fain go on,  
For quivering are the Fishes on the horizon.

— LONGFELLOW.

The sparkling of stars is deftly converted into terms of life; for *guizzare*, like our English 'whisk,' suggests

<sup>1</sup> *De Animal.* lib. XXI, tract. i, cap. 1: 'Videmus etiam pisces domesticari, ita quod ad sonum campanæ conveniunt et annonam accipiunt; quod sine disciplina videtur non posse fieri. Constat ergo quod etiam ista animalia eam habent perfectionem quæ ex participatione est virium motivarum quæ sunt sensus, imaginatio, memoria, æstimatio, et providentia et sagacitas cuiusdam coniecturationis.'

<sup>2</sup> *Conv.* III, ii, 105-112.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* I, 21, is, of course, of no relevance; nor *Purg.* XXXII, 54.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* XI, 112-113.

the flitting of fishes here and there, and the quivering of their tails and fins.

The sudden vanishing of a spirit into flames Dante likens to a fish's plunge:—

*Poi forse per dar loco altrui secondo  
Che presso avea, disparve per lo foco,  
Come per l' acqua pesce andando al fondo.*<sup>1</sup>

Then, to give place perchance to one behind,  
Whom he had near, he vanished in the fire  
As fish in water going to the bottom.

— LONGFELLOW.

And, again, the approach of angels is compared to fish rising for their food in a fish-pond:—

*Come in peschiera, ch' è tranquilla e pura,  
Traggoni i pesci a ciò che vien di fuori,  
Per modo che lo stimin lor pastura ;<sup>2</sup>  
Sì vid' io ben più di mille splendori  
Trarsi ver noi, ed in ciascun s' udia :  
Ecco chi crescerà li nostri amori.*<sup>3</sup>

As, in a fish-pond, which is pure and tranquil,  
The fishes draw to that which from without  
Comes in such fashion that their food they deem it ;  
So I beheld more than a thousand splendours  
Drawing towards us, and in each was heard :  
' Lo, this is she who shall increase our love.'

— LONGFELLOW.

Hungry fishes, rising wistfully in their artificial pool at the chance of a meal, are a sight which Dante may

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XXVI, 133-135.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. p. 215, note 1, and paragraphs on intelligence in animals,  
pp. 79-81.

<sup>3</sup> *Parad.* V, 100-105.

have seen; for in his day men of wealth or nobles kept fish-ponds, not only to please the eye, but also to assure themselves of food in peace and war. One Frenchman at least had a fish-pond on the tower of his castle, and the pond was right full of fish.<sup>1</sup> The picture given by our poet is graceful, but the artist's unwitting dismissal of his dogma as to the fishes' intelligence must delight all who have a mind. Dante the Poet and Dante the Dogmatist are two different men.

In the treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia*,<sup>2</sup> poet and scientist are one; for there Dante speaks of himself as one to whom the world is his country, as to the fishes the sea (*Nos autem cui mundus est patria, velut piscibus æquor*). The image is grandiose and beautiful, but, narrowly scrutinized, seems a half-truth, or an error even; for if *æquor* means the sea, fishes do not swim everywhere, but, as an Eskimo sickens in a hot climate, or as

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 215, note 1 and the following: 'Apud Lutram domum regalem ex rubris lapidibus fabricatam non minori munificentia accuravit. Etenim ex una parte muro fortissimo eam amplexus est, aliam partem piscina ad instar lacus circumfluit, piscium et altilium in se continens omne delectamentum ad pascendum tam visum quam gustum.' — OTTO FRISING, *Gesta Friderici*, IV, 76, cited by ALW. SCHULTZ, *Das höfische Leben*, I, 49. L. GAUTIER, *La Chevalerie*, pp. 502-503, cites *Doon de Maience*, vs. 11058 ff., 'Seur la tor ot un lac et un moult grant vivier Trestout plein de poissons.' Cf. also *Ogier*, vs. 6072, and *Tavola Ritonda*, cited by Manuzzi, 'E' n questa valle era una peschiera nella quale era d'ogni maniera di pesci, che si potesse menzonare.'

Dante's own verse might be used to show the existence of fish-ponds in Italy. It would be strange had a custom so common in ancient Italy survived only in other European countries during the Middle Ages.

<sup>2</sup> I, vi, 17-18.

an ape would die if taken to Labrador, so the fishes are divided into races, few of which are able to go unharmed from warm to chilly water. They, too, have their Iceland and their Italy. Yet Dante's image is not obviously untrue.

If the poet in an allegorical eclogue writes,<sup>1</sup> 'I wonder not that sea fish come together, because all things like what befits their way of living,' the words have a hollow, conventional ring. Dante thinks always more powerfully in his mother tongue. We like best also what he had seen. No matter if the touch is slight, provided it be true. At some moment Dante had watched the scraping off of a bream's scales, and noticed the size of those scales.

*E sì traevan giù l' unghie la scabbia,  
Come coltel di scardova le scaglie,  
O d' altro pesce che più larghe l' abbia.<sup>2</sup>*

And wrenched the scales from off his tettered pelt,  
As a knife scrapeth from a bream the scales,  
Or other fish with scales of larger make.

— PARSONS.

Was Dante ever given to angling? Whatever the poet has to say in favour of the 'contemplative' life, there is no testimony in Dante's own works (or in any known authority) that he ever spent an hour at angling

<sup>1</sup> *Egloga*, II, 20, 24:—

'Quod pisces coëant pelagi, . . .

Non miror; nam cuique placent conformia vitæ,' etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XXIX, 82-84. BENVENUTO DA IMOLA, 'Sicut forte est alius piscis vallinus maior prædicto, qui vocatur regina apud quosdam, apud alios vocatur scarpa.'

—an art not highly esteemed in his time.<sup>1</sup> Dante speaks of fishing for the truth (no doubt the Christian truth) in nobly mistaken lines:—

*Vie più che indarno da riva si parte,  
Perche non torna tal qual ei si muove,  
Chi pesca per lo vero e non ha l' arte :  
E di ciò sono al mondo aperte prove  
Parmenide, Melisso, Brisso e molti  
I quali andavano, e non sapean dove.<sup>2</sup>*

Far more than uselessly he leaves the shore  
(Since he returneth not the same he went),  
Who fishes for the truth and has no skill ;  
And in the world proofs manifest thereof  
Parmenides, Melissus, Brissus are,  
And many who went on and knew not whither.

— LONGFELLOW.

In the more didactic *Convivio* the poet says, with drier precision, that many things belong not to art, though they seem to be akin, as fishing seems to have kinship with boating, though it is really in the art of venery and in venery's command.<sup>3</sup>

The oddest of Dante's allusions to fish concern Simon de Brie, or Brion, a Frenchman, who so relished the eels of Lake Bolsena near Viterbo, that, according to

<sup>1</sup> Angling seems to find almost no place in medieval works on venery. Cf. note 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Parad.* XIII, 121-126.

<sup>3</sup> *Conv.* IV, ix, 133-135, 139-140, 143-145, 'Altre cose sono, che non sono dell' arte, e paiono avere con quella alcuna parentela ; . . . siccome pescare pare avere parentela col navicare ; . . . conciossiacosachè il pescare sia sotto l' arte della venagione, e sotto suo comandare.' Cf. note 1.



Pippino,<sup>1</sup> he used to keep them in milk, then stew them in wine. Buti avers that Simon had eels brought him from Lake Bolsena, 'the finest eels to be eaten, so fat are they and of such flavour, and he put them to death in Vernaccia wine; then had them mashed and mixed with cheese and eggs and certain other things. And he had viands made of them of several kinds, which are so fattening that the said Pope, keeping on, grew so fat that he died.' Villani, being a Guelf, or for some other reason unknown, has nothing to say about these eels of Bolsena; but the evidence is adequate that this Pope was inordinately fond of eels.

Pope Martin's affection is thus recorded in an epitaph:<sup>2</sup>—

*Gaudent anguillæ, quia mortuus hic jacet ille  
Qui quasi morte reas excoriabat eas.*

Here lies he dead.  
Each eel much gladness wins.  
As if they'd been mere criminals,  
He scraped off their poor skins.

Dante thus enriches the fame of Martin IV, once Pope, whom he found amongst the gluttons in Purgatory:—

*Questi (e mostrò col dito) è Bonagiunta,  
Bonagiunta da Lucca, e quella faccia  
Di là da lui, più che l' altre trapunta,  
Ebbe la santa Chiesa in le sue braccia :*

<sup>1</sup> A contemporary of Dante, cited by Philalethes.

<sup>2</sup> POSTILLATOR CASSINENSIS, ' . . . Faciebat coqui anguillas lacus Bolsenæ in vernaccia . . . unde super ejus sepulcro fertur quod sunt isti duo versus.' See Scartazzini on *Purg.* XXIV, 24.

*Dal Torso fu, e purga per digiuno  
Le anguille di Bolsena e la vernaccia.*<sup>1</sup>

His finger showed me : Bonagiunta, lo !  
Bonagiunta of Lucca ; and that face  
Beyond him there, more sharpened than his own,  
The holy Church once held in his embrace :  
He was of Tours, and fasting doth atone  
Here for Bolsena's eels, Vernaccia's wine.

— PARSONS.

Pope Martin, then, is sure of immortality ; thanks to Dante and Bolsena's eels. It was the eels, too, that suggested to Dante the swimming of Geryon, a demon of whose departure he says : —

*Là ov' era il petto, la coda rivolse,  
E quella tesa, come anguilla mosse.*<sup>2</sup>

There, where the breast was, the tail he turned,  
And straight behind him moved it, like an eel.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XXIV, 19-24.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XVII, 103-104. See chapter on 'Geryon,' p. 64.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### THE SPONGE — IL FUNGO MARINO

THE medieval theory as to the development of the human soul found its way into the encyclopedic *Divine Comedy*. Having explained how the body is begun, Dante tells us how life begins : —

*Anima fatta la virtute attiva,  
Qual d' una pianta, in tanto differente,  
Che quest' è in via, e quella è già a riva ;  
Tanta opra poi che già si move e sente,  
Come fungo marino ;<sup>1</sup> ed inde imprende  
Ad organar le posse ond' è semente.<sup>2</sup>*

The active virtue having become a soul, like that of a plant (in so far different that this is on the way and that already arrived), so worketh then, that now it moves and feels as a sea-fungus doth ; and then it proceeds to organise the powers of which it is the germ. — NORTON.

Dante's sea-fungus may be some other zoöphyte, but is probably the sponge ; for both Aristotle and Albert of Bollstädt lay stress on the capacity of the sponge to feel. Here is the doctrine of Aristotle : ' The sponge, also, as they say, is sensitive, of which this is an indication, that it contracts itself at the approach of the per-

<sup>1</sup> Though *fungus*, according to Forcellini, never means ' sponge ' in classic Latin, the word is akin both in form and meaning to σπόγγος.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* XXV, 52-57.

son who plucks it, so that the divulsion of it is difficult. It likewise does the same thing when there is much wind, and the weather is tempestuous, in order that it may not be removed from its situation. . . . There is, also, another genus of sponges which they call *aplysia*, because it is incapable of being washed. These sponges have large canals, but all the rest of their body is dense, and when they are dissected they are found to be more dense and viscous than other sponges, and the whole of their substance resembles the lungs. It is, however, universally acknowledged that this genus of sponges is sensitive and lives for a long time.’<sup>1</sup>

Albert of Bollstädt (whose opinion is purely that of a medieval encyclopedist) says that the sponge moves from place to place and is nearer the nature of the plant than is the *stincus*, and again he affirms that eels and certain other creatures are of a higher order than various sponges, which possess nothing but a very vague sense of touch, and have no motion save of shrinking and of dilation, and through this movement they never get from place to place except in water or by accident.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *De Hist. Animal.* V, 16 (De verticis, et spongiarum genere, quove modo gignuntur).

<sup>2</sup> *De Animal.* lib. 21, tract. 1, cap. 6 and 9, ‘Spongia tamen [in opposition to the *stincus*] quæ movetur de loco ad locum, vicinior est plantæ naturæ quam stincus: et spongia immobilis secundum locum adhuc vicinior, ita quod videtur planta quædam esse aliquid participans animalitatis.’ *Ibid.* cap. 9, ‘Imperfectiora vero his [anguillis, etc.] sunt spongiarum genera, quæ de omnibus sensibus non nisi confusum valde tactum acceperunt, nec motum habent nisi contractionis et dilatationis, et hoc motu de loco ad locum non feruntur nisi in aqua et per accidens.’



THE GRIFFIN FOE OF THE COLT  
From a medieval MS. After Cahier

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### THE GRIFFIN

ON the other bank of the river Lethe in Purgatory Dante beheld a mystic procession, heralded by a brilliant light and music. First came four and twenty elders, crowned with flower-de-luce, and singing, then four animals crowned with green leaves and Argus-eyed in each of their hundred and forty-four wings.

The interval between these four contained  
A chariot triumphal on two wheels,  
Which by a griffin's neck came drawn along ;  
And upward he extended both his wings  
Between the middle list and three and three,  
So that he injured none by cleaving it.  
So high they rose that they were lost to sight ;  
His limbs were gold, so far as he was bird,  
And white the others with vermillion mingled.  
Not only Rome with no such splendid car



E'er gladdened Africanus or Augustus,  
 But poor to it that of the Sun would be, —  
 That of the Sun, which severing was burnt up  
 At the importunate orison of Earth,  
 When Jove was so mysteriously just.<sup>1</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

Seven ladies were dancing by this car, and with them came the four and twenty elders. Presently the righteous people that had come between the Septentrion and the Griffin halted, then turned toward the car as to the token of celestial peace, and one of them, as if sent from Heaven, singing *Veni, sponsa de Libano* (Come, bride from Lebanon),<sup>2</sup> cried out thrice and all the others after.<sup>3</sup> A little while later Dante saw Beatrice gazing upon the beast that is but one person in two natures.<sup>4</sup> Then Dante, led to the breast of the Griffin, where Beatrice was standing, looked steadily into her eyes, which were still bent upon the Griffin.

As in a glass the Sun, not otherwise  
 Within them was the twofold monster shining,  
 Now with the one, now with the other nature.  
 Think, reader, if within myself I marvelled,  
 When I beheld the thing itself stand still,  
 And in its image it transformed itself.<sup>5</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

Having moved somewhat away from the stream, the procession halts at the foot of a lofty tree, to the trunk of which the Griffin fastens the pole of the car.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XXIX, 106-120.

<sup>2</sup> In the Vulgate (*Cantic.* iv, 8), 'Veni de Libano, sponsa mea, veni de Libano, veni !'

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* XXXI, 79-81.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* XXX,

<sup>5</sup> *Purg.* XXXI, 121-126.

Then to the wheels the maidens turned themselves,  
And the Griffin moved his burden benedight,  
But so that not a feather of him fluttered.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

‘Blessed art thou, O Griffin, who dost not  
Pluck with thy beak these branches sweet to taste,  
Since appetite by this was turned to evil.’  
After this fashion round the tree robust  
The others shouted ; and the twofold creature :  
‘Thus is preserved the seed of all the just.’<sup>2</sup>  
And turning to the pole which he had dragged,  
He drew it close beneath the widowed bough,  
And what was of it unto it left bound.<sup>3</sup>

—LONGFELLOW.

Not long after this, whilst Dante sleeps, the Griffin disappears.

Dante’s own reference to Africanus and Augustus renders it most probable that he drew mainly from Roman triumphs for his own triumphal car. The dancing maidens, however, and the Griffin suggest the dancing Mænads of Bacchus, and the panthers fabled to have drawn that deity’s car.<sup>4</sup> And in this procedure there would be nothing wonderful ; for it is precisely such adoption of pagan rites that one finds everywhere

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XXXII, 25–27.

<sup>2</sup> Scartazzini cites Christ’s words to John the Baptist (Matthew iii, 15), ‘Sic decet nos implere omnem iustitiam.’

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* XXXII, 43–51.

<sup>4</sup> Rather late there came from the East the legend which pictured striped or spotted beasts drawing Bacchus. Most common is the panther. Sometimes the god rides this ardent, bounding creature ; more often he draws the car. Cf. D’AREMBERT ET SAGLIO, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités*, s.v. ‘Bacchus,’ vol. I, p. 622.

in the ceremonies of the Christian Church. The cast-off finery of heathendom is refashioned; orgies are moralised. Humanity, unable to invent anything wholly new, and incapable of passing more than a few centuries in artistic penury, unlocks the chests that the ascetics had been unable to destroy, and takes from them, little by little, the beloved ancient splendours. Thus the Saturnalian revelries are merged in Christmas, and the panthers of Bacchus become the Griffin — Christ-symbol of Dante — and draw a triumphal car.<sup>1</sup>

Although the griffin in the books and art of Christendom<sup>2</sup> passed almost universally as a demon that destroyed horses and men, he became in Dante the symbol of Christ<sup>3</sup> — a splendid application of allegory; for, as

<sup>1</sup> In *Le Roman d'Alexandre*, ed. Michelant, p. 385, the griffin is conceived of as carrying Alexander. See CAHIER, *Curiosités Myst.* (*Bas-reliefs mystérieux étudiés dans plusieurs églises d'Allemagne, de France et d'Italie*, p. 165 ff.).

<sup>2</sup> See SOLINUS, *Polyhist.* XV, 22; HUGO OF ST. VICTOR, *De Bestiis et aliis rebus*, lib. III, cap. 4: 'Gryphs, seu ut Isidorus scribit, gryphes est animal pennatum et quadrupes quod in hyperboreis nascitur montibus, omni parte corporis, leoni, alis et facie aquilis simile, equis vehementer infestum. Nam et homines vivos discerpit et integros in nidum asportat.' A demoniacal griffin is seen on a historiated sculpture of the cathedral of Freiburg-im-Breisgau. Opposed to him is a man with a shield. Other sculptures show the man as a conqueror. See illustration of my text, and cf. CAHIER, *Mélanges*, I, pl. XXIV. According to Cahier, the typical griffin of the Middle Ages was the foe of the colt, which he carried off. See *Mélanges*, II, 226–227. The fact that in all the works edited by Migne, Christ almost never figures as a griffin, indicates that such symbolisation was very uncommon. See MIGNE, *Index de nominibus Christi*.

<sup>3</sup> Dante's source is probably ISIDOR OF SEVILLE, *Etymol.* lib. XII, cap. ii, 17: 'Gryphes vocantur, quod sit animal pennatum et quadrupes. Hoc genus ferarum in Hyperboreis montibus nascitur. Omni

Christ was both God and man, so this double monster is half lion, half eagle. His wings disappear in heaven, like the nature of Christ. His colours are those of the



THE GRIFFIN FOE OF MAN

From a medieval sculpture. After Cahier

Bridegroom in the Song of Solomon.<sup>1</sup> 'My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold. . . .' Thus a detail of a

parte corporis leones sunt, alis et facie aquilis similes, et equis vehementer infesti. Nam et homines vivos discerpunt.' Scartazzini cites another passage in the same chapter: 'Sed et Christus est leo pro regno et fortitudine. . . . Aquila propter quod post resurrectionem ad astra remeavit.' Three griffins on the portal of the cathedral at Ruvo seem to symbolise good rather than evil. Cf. H. W. SCHULTZ, *Denkmäler der Kunst des Mittelalters in Unteritalien*, Dresden, 1860, pl. XVI. In the baptistry of Calisto at Cividale in Friuli may be seen two sculptured griffins, probably holy symbols. See F. DE DARTEIN, *Étude sur l'architecture lombarde*. A griffin, perhaps demoniacal, occurs on the eastern portal of St. Fidelis at Como.

<sup>1</sup> v, 10-II.



purely poetical description is taken by Dante to hide an allegory; for theology has long affirmed the Bridegroom of Solomon's Song to be Christ. No feather of the griffin flutters when he moves the car because Christ changes in no wise himself when he moves the Church. It is only in the eyes of Beatrice that the monster seemed to move. Thus with extraordinary subtlety Dante sets forth one of the great truths of psychology and philosophy: matter is the same though the conception of it vary in the minds of different men.

Although the fall of allegory and the ever greater invasions of science into art have lessened the relish for speaking griffins and for similar freaks of the naïve<sup>1</sup> ages, there is yet something grandiose in this monster of Dante's. To an empty nothing the poet gives a local habitation and a name. The griffin had been known before Dante as a fierce winged creature that dwelt somewhere in Asiatic Scythia or the Hyperborean Mountains<sup>2</sup>—two medieval fairy-lands. Dante puts the monster into his Purgatory, where it draws a car in the midst of old men and dancing maidens, quotes the Bible, and magically vanishes, having given for only a moment a slight illusion of being alive.

<sup>1</sup> ALBERTUS MAGNUS (*De Animal.* lib. XXIII, tract. unicus) is sceptical as to the existence of the griffin. So is the Anonimo Fiorentino. See his comment on *Inf.* IV, 123. E. P. EVANS (*Animal Symbolism*, p. 106) says that griffins' claws are now preserved as relics in churches at Hildesheim, Weimar, Cologne, and Grau, and as curiosities in the museums of Dresden, Vienna, and other European cities.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 227, notes 2 and 3, which partly explain and exemplify the absence of true science in the Middle Ages.



## CHAPTER XXXV

### BIRD-LIFE, AND BIRDS UNNAMED

BESIDES giving many descriptions of birds that he names, — and these are a score, — Dante draws from bird-life various images<sup>1</sup> or illustrations,<sup>2</sup> some of them conventional, others original and not without their interest or charm. Children of Dante's time, or at least theoretical children, seem, after attaining to an apple, and just before rising to the wish for fine apparel, to have longed for a little bird.<sup>3</sup> This birdling is not the kind that nestles in the cowl of a garrulous monk, for that bird is the Evil One.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Dante calls one of his demons a wicked bird,<sup>5</sup> and does so, no doubt, because many devils in those days had wings. So have the angels, of whom one is called the 'bird of God.'<sup>6</sup> Even Cato's beard is composed of 'honourable plumes.'<sup>7</sup> Wicked Florence beats her wings for braggart joy over

<sup>1</sup> Dante speaks of a poet who will perhaps drive both Guidos from their nests. See *Purg.* XI, 97-99.

<sup>2</sup> A very quaint one is used to indicate how a certain spirit grew in splendour (*Parad.* XXVII, 13-15) : —

' E tal nella sembianza sua divenne,  
Qual diverrebbe Giove, s' egli e Marte  
Fossero augelli e cambiassersi penne.'

<sup>3</sup> *Conv.* IV, xii, 161-167.

<sup>4</sup> *Parad.* XXIX, 118-120.

<sup>5</sup> *Inf.* XXII, 96.

<sup>6</sup> *Purg.* IV, 129, 'L'uccel di Dio che siede in sulla porta.' Cf. *Parad.* VI, 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Purg.* I, 42.

land and sea ;<sup>1</sup> and lack of right ambition, care spent on law or medicine's aphorisms, or fleshly delight, or ease, cause mortals to beat their wings too low, making a great ado over mere fleeting things.<sup>2</sup> Flying souls speed away so swiftly that their legs seem wings,<sup>3</sup> and as Dante mounts to Heaven, nearer and nearer to 'Highest Jove,' he feels as if wings were bearing him, and he is lifted on the wings of desire, and seems to himself to become more and more fledged as his eagerness grows to be in Heaven.<sup>4</sup>

Though Dante's attitude toward birds in general is friendly, he speaks of a woman who cooked her own son as 'putting her beak to him,'<sup>5</sup> and in the image one may note again the inability of this great mind to describe the horrid, yet perfectly human traits of mankind without going to some other creature than man for a vituperation. Dante denies that birds can speak,<sup>6</sup> but he feels the beauty of their song ; he denies them an immortal soul,<sup>7</sup> yet puts them into his Terrestrial Paradise, where they sing in a marvellous breezy forest.

*Un' aura dolce, senza mutamento  
Avere in sè, mi feria per la fronte,  
Non di più colpo, che soave vento ;  
Per cui le fronde, tremolando pronte,  
Tutte e quante piegavano alla parte*

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXVI, 1-2.      <sup>2</sup> *Parad.* XI, 1-12.      <sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XVI, 87.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* IV, 28 ; XXVII, 123.    *Parad.* XV, 54, 72, 81.

<sup>5</sup> *Purg.* XXIII, 30. Flavius Josephus (Dante's probable source) apparently says nothing to warrant Dante in borrowing his image from a bird of prey. See Scartazzini on *Purg.* XXIII, 30.

<sup>6</sup> *De V. E.* I, ii, 56-57.    *Conv.* III, vii, 104-107.

<sup>7</sup> *Conv.* III, ii, 105-112.

*U' la prim' ombra gitta il santo monte ;  
 Non però dal lor esser dritto sparte  
 Tanto, che gli augelletti per le cime  
 Lasciasser d' operare ogni lor arte ;  
 Ma con piena letizia l' ôre prime,  
 Cantando, ricevieno intra le foglie,  
 Che tenevan bordone alle sue rime,  
 Tal, qual di ramo in ramo si raccoglie  
 Per la pineta, in sul lito di Chiassi,  
 Quand' Eolo Scirocco fuor discioglie.<sup>1</sup>*

A softly breathing air, that no mutation  
 Had in itself, upon the forehead smote me  
 No heavier blow than of a gentle wind,  
 Whereat the branches, lightly tremulous,  
 Did all of them bow downwards toward that side  
 Where its first shadow casts the Holy Mountain ;  
 Yet not from their upright direction swayed,  
 So that the little birds upon their tops  
 Should leave the practice of each art of theirs ;  
 But with full ravishment the hours of prime,<sup>2</sup>  
 Singing, received they in the midst of leaves,  
 That ever bore a burden to their rhymes,  
 Such as from branch to branch goes gathering on  
 Through the pine forest on the shore of Chiassi,  
 When Eolus unlooses the Sirocco.

— LONGFELLOW.

Happy birds to have passed from the first into the second life, still privileged to minister to the 'animals that Nature holds most dear'! And how hard it is even for a Dante to imagine another existence without making its most beautiful features almost the same as

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XXVIII, 7-21.

<sup>2</sup> Better translated, 'the early breezes.' *Ôre* = *aure*.

those that redeem our poor earth, and seem to suggest something infinitely more lovely in a life to come! But, alas! these birds are not real. One feels only too plainly that they are mechanisms in unreal trees, and that they are singing all too violently.

The monk St. Brandan, in his mysterious voyage, came to a fabulous isle where he beheld in a tree that rose above the clouds a multitude of birds—all white; 'never saw man birds so beautiful.' On inquiry the monk learned that they were angels who had fallen because of rebellious pride.<sup>1</sup> Dante's birds were never angels, but are marvellous, none the less, like those in Tundal's Vision, which is earlier than Dante's. Tundal's Vision relates how to the Soul, delighting in these sights and wishing to tarry there, the Angel said, 'Look!' and, looking, the Soul beheld a great, wide-spreading tree, full of every kind of fruit, and in the foliage dwelt a multitude of birds, of many hues, singing and warbling in different voices a most sweet melody.'<sup>2</sup> After all, these birds are the same as those in Dante's poem. They are the well-known songsters of minnesinger and troubadour. They are melodious, but only in the verses in which they sing. These are the same birds as Dante describes in a sonnet,<sup>3</sup> only the birds of the sonnet cannot be blithe and songful the whole year round. 'Now,' sings the poet, 'now that the world is

<sup>1</sup> *Les Voyages Merveilleux de St. Brandan*, ed. by Francisque Michel, Paris, 1878.

<sup>2</sup> See *Scelta di Curios. Lett.*, vol. 128, p. 102.

<sup>3</sup> Sonnetto XLII ('Ora che 'l mondo s'adorna e si veste,' etc.). Cf. Ballata IV ('Fresca rosa novella'). Ballata IV may be spurious.

growing beautiful, donning leaves and flowers, and every meadow smiles, and cold and fog are out of the sky, and the animals are playful, and love is moving every creature, and the birds, leaving doleful sounds and woful shrieks, send their voices through mountains, lea, and forest : since the bright, sweet, joyous time of spring is coming with its green, I gladden and renew my hope.' So even Dante is capable of the most conventional style. Subtly the birds' song of spring appears again in some verses of the *Paradiso*.

*L' altro ternaro, che cos' germoglia  
In questa primavera sempiterna,  
Che notturno Ariete non dispoglia,  
Perpetualmente Osanna sverna  
Con tre melode, che suonano in tree  
Ordini di letizia, onde s' interna.*<sup>1</sup>

The second Triad, which is germinating  
In such wise as this sempiternal spring,  
That no nocturnal Aries despoils,  
Perpetually Hosanna warbles forth  
With threefold melody, that sounds in three  
Orders of joy, with which it is intrined.

— LONGFELLOW.

The note is conventional, yet birds do sing more lustily in spring, and the conventional note may have the merit of being true.

Dante tells in a Canzone<sup>2</sup> of the birds' migrations, which he describes so finely in the case of the starlings and of the cranes. 'Fled,' he cries, 'is every bird that follows the heat, from the land of Europe, which never

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* XXVIII, 115-120.

<sup>2</sup> *Canz.* XV, 27-29.



loses the seven chilly stars.' Gracefully, too, he pictures the figures made by birds as they rise gladly from the river bank where they have been feeding; and the touch is true, but it is blended in Dante's mind with a legend of the alphabet-making cranes.<sup>1</sup> The source is more obvious in three verses whose bearing is didactic, as in the Proverbs of Solomon.<sup>2</sup>

*Nuovo augelletto due o tre aspetta ;  
Ma dinanzi dagli occhi dei pennuti,  
Rete si spiega indarno o si saetta.*<sup>3</sup>

The callow birdlet waits for two or three,  
But to the eyes of those already fledged  
In vain the net is spread or shaft is shot.

— LONGFELLOW.

Since both nets and arrows were employed till a long while after Dante, his verses were as 'contemporary' then as in the time of Solomon, and are not without a tender grace. Yet Dante's capacity for the gentlest sympathy comes out more plainly still in a passage that describes the loves of the lower animals. There is hardly another so sympathetic a tribute to maternity in Dante.<sup>4</sup>

*Come l' augello, intra l' amate fronde,  
Posato al nido dei suoi dolci nati,  
La notte, che le cose ci nasconde,  
Che, per veder gli aspetti disiati,  
E per trovar lo cibo onde li pasca,  
In che i gravi labor gli sono aggrati,*

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* XVIII, 73-78. See chapter on 'The Crane,' p. 284.

<sup>2</sup> Proverbs i, 17, 'Frustra autem iacitur rete ante oculos pennatorum.'

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* XXXI, 61-63.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Sestina*, IV, 23-24, and the traditional description of the mother stork and her young in chapter on 'The Stork,' p. 292.

*Previene il tempo in sull' aperta frasca,  
 E con ardente affetto il sole aspetta,  
 Fiso guardando, pur che l' alba nasca ;  
 Cos' la Donna mia si stava eretta  
 Ed attenta, rivolta inver la plaga  
 Sotto la quale il sol mostra men fretta.<sup>1</sup>*

Even as a bird, 'mid the beloved leaves,  
 Quiet upon the nest of her sweet brood,  
 Throughout the night that hideth all things from us,  
 Who, that she may behold their longed-for looks  
 And find the food wherewith to nourish them,  
 In which to her grave labours grateful are,  
 Anticipates the time on open spray  
 And with an ardent longing waits the sun,  
 Gazing intent as soon as breaks the dawn ;  
 Even thus my Lady standing was, erect  
 And vigilant, turned round towards the zone  
 Under which the sun displays least haste.

— LONGFELLOW.

The mind halts when Beatrice is introduced and wonders what resemblance there can be between nesting birds and angels. Indeed, this is why the imagery of the *Divine Comedy* is so intense in the *Inferno* and even in the *Purgatorio*, but so often weakened in the *Paradiso* by comparisons to situations such as no imagination can conceive. This passage wavers between the two extremes, — the accuracy of the *Inferno's* analogies and the vague similitudes of the *Paradiso*, whose value and beauty depend almost wholly on the descriptive power of Dante.

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* XXIII, 1-12. Kuhns (p. 43) cites a parallel in Middle High German. Cf. also Scartazzini's citations.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### FOWLING

No medieval noble who could afford the luxury was likely to be without falcons, hawks, and hounds; but fowling was 'the amusement of the poor'! According to King Modus, whose kingdom borders on that of Old King Cole, everybody may go a-fowling, and not only enjoy the sport, but make a living.<sup>1</sup> Though the nobles held aloof, preferring falconry, the art of snaring or shooting birds was ardently enjoyed by the majority throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In a book compiled by Eugenio Raimondi about 1620, one may see fowlers driving birds into nets, decoy-birds in barbed trees luring other birds to death by impalement, a fowler behind his net waving his lure (a pair of wings on a pole), a screech-owl perched amid sticky twigs,—in fine, every variety of net, snare, trap, lure, or gin that human ingenuity, voracity, and the desire to kill could inspire.<sup>2</sup>

Dante exalts the aristocratic falcon, but shows his disdain of fowling by telling how he gazed through green leaves, as they are wont who waste their lives

<sup>1</sup> Cited by P. LACROIX, *Le Moyen Age et la Renaissance*, vol. I, cap. 3 (Oisellerie). Lacroix fails to give the page.

<sup>2</sup> *Delle Caccie di Eugenio Raimondi, Bresciano, libri quattro* (5th — supplementary — book), pp. 211, 243, 268, 284.

following some little bird.<sup>1</sup> In an old French poem, Ganelon, the traitor, cries out that to catch two plovers Roland would pass a whole day.<sup>2</sup>

Solomon says that a net is vainly cast before the eyes of full-fledged birds.<sup>3</sup> Dante borrows the figure and adds an arrow.<sup>4</sup> Again, a sinner says to him: 'With words so sweet dost thou entice me, that I cannot be still! And may it not aggrieve thee that I lime myself to talk with thee a little while.'<sup>5</sup> Some of Dante's sinners were passing eternity in boiling bird-lime.<sup>6</sup> The idea is curious. But from fowling Dante drew one fine image which has without much warrant been assigned to falconry. The throngs of souls on the bank of Acheron drift helplessly into the craft of Charon like autumn leaves.

'As in autumn the leaves drop one after the other until the branch sees all its spoils upon the ground, so the evil seed of Adam cast themselves from that bank one by one, at becks, as birds go to their lure.'

*Come d' autunno si levan le foglie  
L' una appresso dell' altra, infin che il ramo*

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XXIII, 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Jehan de Lanson*, cited by GAUTIER, *La Chevalerie*, pp. 174-175.

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs i, 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* XXXI, 61-63. Quoted in chapters on 'Bird-life, and Birds Unnamed,' p. 235; *ibid.*, note 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Inf.* XIII, 55-57. Cf. *Hamlet*, iii. 3, 68:—

'O limed soul, that, struggling to be free,  
Art more engaged!'

Cf. *Parad.* XVII, 31-33, and next note.

<sup>6</sup> *Inf.* XXI, 124-126. The expression must not be taken too literally.

*Vede alla terra tutte le sue spoglie,  
 Similmente il mal seme d' Adamo :  
 Gittansi di quel lito ad una ad una,  
 Per cenni, come augel per suo<sup>1</sup> richiamo.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Both *augel* and *suo* in vs. 117 may be plural, *augel* as a clipped form and *suo* for *loro*. It is almost impossible to believe that Dante could have imagined falcons returning to their lure so helplessly and in such numbers. In his *Art of Hawking*, lib. I, cap. I, Frederick says, 'Amplius aves rapaces per hanc artem docentur venari simul eandem prædam,' but he does not mean falcons by the score. 'Richiamo' (in English, 'reclayme') may mean a 'lure.' It can also mean a decoy, a *paretaio*, as the Italians say. In the main I agree with Lubin, who takes *richiamo* to mean a cage with a decoy in it hidden in the bushes or twigs.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* III, 112-117.





FREDERICK II AND FALCONER

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### FALCONRY

#### THE FALCON; THE GOSHAWK AND SPARROWHAWK

FALCONRY entered Europe early in the Dark Ages, and having thriven as the lordliest of sports for some twelve hundred years, gave way at last to fowling-pieces, and to the growth of a population whose ever increasing farms and gardens could no longer be trodden down by the scurrying falconers and the horses of their noble employers. To the art of falconry is devoted the one, the only remarkable work on ornithology of the Middle Ages.

Frederick II of the Hohenstaufen, who wrote most of this book (which was completed by Manfred) affirms in the first chapter that venery with birds is worthier than other kinds of venery, for birds of prey are more difficult to train. Falconry does not rely on dogs, fer-

rets, or leopards, which are easier to teach than birds of prey, since the latter are more timid with men.<sup>1</sup>

When Frederick was in the Holy Land he received from kings of Arabia falconers more skilful than those of the West, and many kinds of falcons. 'Besides,' he writes, 'we neglected not to call to us experts in falconry, not only from Araby, but from everywhere, from the time, that is to say, when we first proposed to set down in a book what belongs to this art. And we learnt from them whatever they knew better, as we have said at the beginning.'<sup>2</sup>

So high a place did falconry hold in aristocratic life that the Florentine painter, Andrea Cione, called Orcagna, translating into colours Petrarca's 'Triumph of Death,' set in the foreground of his fresco two lords, each holding on his gloved hand a falcon, one a peregrine, the other a goshawk or gerfalcon — stately, unmistakable emblems of elegance and lordly rank.<sup>3</sup> In the Mews of Charing Cross the falcons of Richard II were kept in 1377,<sup>4</sup> and it is likely that the Pisan Muda,<sup>5</sup> called after Ugolino's dreadful death the Tower of Hunger, had been the mews of some baron before it fell into the hands of the Commune of Pisa.

The Emperor's work on falconry was illuminated in the thirteenth century, so crudely, however, that falconers at

<sup>1</sup> *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus*, I, cap. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* II, cap. 77.

<sup>3</sup> For reproduction in colour, see *Les Arts au Moyen Age*, par P. LACROIX, Paris, 1869, p. 282. Cf. *Conv.* IV, xiv, 83-84.

<sup>4</sup> STRUTT, *Sports and Pastimes*, p. 96.

<sup>5</sup> See *Inf.* XXXIII, and the frontispiece of the 'Ottimo Comento.'

sea appear to be flying their birds at quarry almost as large as their ships. In all there are thirty-six miniatures, covering various scenes in falconry.<sup>1</sup> To falconry were devoted many other works<sup>2</sup> during the Middle Ages, not only treatises on the training of various kinds of falcons and hawks, but on their maladies and humours. These birds held equal rank in their owner's affection with his pet horses, his bird-dogs, and hounds. Lord Aucassin, hero of the well-known *chante-fable* of the twelfth century, having been deceitfully wronged by his father, is ready to let their enemy, Count Bougart of Valence, go free, if the count will do all possible harm to Aucassin's father. 'Sir,' said Aucassin's captive, 'in Heaven's name mock me not, but set me a ransom! You can ask of me neither gold nor silver, nor steeds, nor palfreys, nor vair, nor gray, nor hounds, nor hawks, that I will not give you!'<sup>3</sup>

Dante Alighieri makes a saviour of Italy out of an allegorical boar hound,<sup>4</sup> and to hawks and falcons he devotes verses worthy of so splendid a feature of everyday life in his time. The poet must often have seen lords and ladies riding out to the fields with hooded falcons perched on their heavily gloved hands, and must at some time have gone with them, for his descriptions of hawking are too vivid to be second-hand. Though Dante looked down upon fowling, falconry stood

<sup>1</sup> D'AGINCOURT, *Hist. de l'Art par les Monuments*, vol. V, pl. 73.

<sup>2</sup> For bibliography, see JAMES EDMUND HARTING, *Bibliotheca Accipitraria*, Quaritch, London, 1891.

<sup>3</sup> See editions of H. Suchier and of F. W. Bourdillon, *ad init.*

<sup>4</sup> The *veltro*. See chapter on 'The Dog,' p. 118.



# KING DANCHI AND HIS FALCONER

From a fourteenth century MS. After Zambrini





so high in his esteem that he calls God's bidding a 'lure';<sup>1</sup> and two angels that drive a satanic reptile out of a valley in Purgatory are 'heavenly goshawks'! The name has a queer sound now, but in those days it rang with chivalry.

Two angels with flaming swords, clad in green, with green wings, stand for a moment at each side of Sordello and Dante, then fly at the serpent.

*Io non vidi, e però dicer non posso,  
Come mosser gli astor celestiali,  
Ma vidi bene l' uno e l' altro mosso.  
Sentendo fender l' aere alle verdi ali,  
Fuggì 'l serpente, e gli angeli dier volta  
Suso alle poste rivolando eguali.<sup>2</sup>*

I was not looking, so must leave unsaid  
When first they darted, but full well I saw  
Both heavenly goshawks had their plumage spread.  
Soon as the serpent felt the withering flaw  
Of those green wings, it vanished : and they sped  
Up to their posts again with even flight.

— After PARSONS.

Perhaps a goshawk could be flown at so uncouth a quarry ; but why does Dante compare his angels to goshawks rather than to the noble peregrine? Had Dante chosen the wrong bird, his contemporaries would have halted in unpleasant wonder, as we should, were some contemporary of our own to speak of a 'pointing greyhound.' Dante compares the pursuit to that of goshawks because they fly low, pursuing their quarry in a

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XIX, 61-63.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* VIII, 103-108.

line, or 'raking' after it, as a falconer would say; and the quarry must make haste if it would get off alive.<sup>1</sup> These heavenly goshawks rake well, but their return to their posts is unlike the goshawks' return to glove or lure.

To describe the descending demon Geryon, Dante employs an image wherein the falcon's character is portrayed with such vigour as to make the outward bearing perfectly reveal the bird's inward state, her disappointment and slighted pride, for no quarry has been started and the falconer has failed to show the lure.

*Come il falcon ch' è stato assai sull' ali,  
Che senza veder logoro o uccello,  
Fa dire al falconiere : ' Oimè tu cali' :  
Discende lasso, onde si move snello,  
Per cento rote, e da lungi si pone  
Dal suo maestro, disdegnoso e fello :  
Così ne pose al fondo Gerione  
A piè a piè della stagliata rocca,  
E, discarcate le nostre persone,  
Si dileguò, come da corda cocca.<sup>2</sup>*

'As a falcon that has been long upon the wing, who, without seeing lure or bird, makes the falconer say, "Alas! thou'rt coming down!" descends wearily in a hundred circles to the spot whence she rose swiftly, and aloof from her master settles down, scornful and sullen,<sup>3</sup> so Geryon set us at the bottom by the base of a rough-hewn rock, and, being unburdened of us, was off like an arrow from the bow'!

<sup>1</sup> ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De Animal.* lib. XXIII, tract. unicus, 'Dicitur astur . . . quia . . . iuxta terram volat contra morem falconum.'  
<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XVII, 127-136.      <sup>3</sup> To 'block,' in falconry.

How well Dante understands the bad humour of this gerfalcon or queenly peregrine! No wonder she is peevish, after hours, it may be, of sailing with her keen eyes fixed on meadow and stream for a bird or hare! Meanwhile the falconer has been following her<sup>1</sup> from below, ready to dash forward the second she happens to 'stoop' for her prey.

By winter the hawk's eye has changed from a deep yellow to a fiery orange.<sup>2</sup> What then does Dante mean when he speaks of having seen armed Cæsar, with eyes of a sparrowhawk?

*Cesare armato con gli occhi grifagni.*<sup>3</sup>

Suetonius records that Cæsar had black and lively eyes — *nigris vegetisque oculis*.<sup>4</sup> Since the eyes of no full-grown sparrowhawk are really black, and since no man's eyes are ever orange, Dante must have got his idea from some tradition, or have meant simply that Cæsar's eyes flamed like a hawk's, or were black as a falcon's.<sup>5</sup> In an eleventh-century poem on Alexander the Great, by

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* XVIII, 45, 'Com' occhio segue suo falcon, volando.' Cf. *Æn.* VI, 200, 'Quantum acie possent oculi servare sequentum.'

<sup>2</sup> Cf. E. B. MICHELL, *The Art and Practice of Hawking*, Methuen, London, 1900, pp. 33 and 35. Cf., also, *Tresor*, p. 202, 'Grifains est uns oisiaus que on prent a l'entree d'yver, et a les oils rouges et vermaus comme feu.'

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* IV, 123.

<sup>4</sup> *Vita Cæsaris*, § 45.

<sup>5</sup> *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus*, I, cap. 24, 'Quædam sunt nigrorum oculorum penitus, ut modi falconum, sed nigredo pupillæ in talibus intensior est nigredine albuginei humoris et quædam sunt oculorum glaucorum in circuitu pupillæ, quæ nigra est ut genera accipitrum, et nisorum, quædam sunt aliorum colorum et aliæ mutant colorem in oculis secundum mutationem ætatis.'

Alberic de Besançon, Alexander is declared to have had one eye bluish like a dragon's, the other black as a falcon's (*l'un uyl ab glauc cum de dracon, et l'autre neyr cum de falcon*).<sup>1</sup> Could Dante have meant that Cæsar's eyes were simply keen as a hawk's, or did he intend to make Cæsar orange-eyed like Charon the demon, whose eyes were like hot coals?<sup>2</sup>

There is obscurity, also, in Dante's comparison of himself to a falcon. At the turning of God's lure he became 'like the falcon that first gazes at her feet, then turns at the cry and stretches forward with eagerness for the meal that draws her thither.'

*Quale il falcon, che prima ai piè si mira,  
Indi si volge al grido, e si protende  
Per lo disio del pasto che là il tira,  
Tal mi fec' io,<sup>3</sup>—*

Various explanations seem possible. A falcon, relieved of her hood, would look down at her jesses before attempting to fly from her perch to the falconer's lure, her attention being called to him by his cry; or, again, she may be imagined in repose with her eyes cast down toward her feet, then, starting at the shout of the falconer, who, lure in hand, comes to feed her, and stretching greedily toward him for her meal.<sup>4</sup> On the other

<sup>1</sup> BARTSCH, *Chrestomathie*, 7th ed., col. 19, vss. 41-42.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Gregory, cited by Camerini, is reported to have said that certain men have in their eyes kites and hawks.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* XIX, 64-67.

<sup>4</sup> *Liber de Curis Avium*, in *Scelta di Curios. Lett.*, vol. 140, pp. 28-30: 'Thus one should keep the Peregrine Falcon. At first, when she is wild, make her forthwith the leathern hood. Furthermore,



hand, perhaps she has been drooping, until of a sudden the falconers' shouts, as they beat the bushes for game, awake her, and she is ready to be cast at the quarry. Or, again, one may imagine a falcon in course of training. According to Colonel Delmé-Radcliffe<sup>1</sup> the falconer was and is still accustomed, in training a falcon, to stroke her on the legs with a feather, brushing, meanwhile, a bit of meat over her feet, and, as she gulps, he whistles, or makes with lips or tongue some sound which he wishes her to connect with the idea of food. Very soon she will tighten her grip at the sound, and bend down to feel for food. After a while the falconer begins to lure, calling as he sets his decoy, first near, then far. She will answer his call. Finally, the cry may be that of the quarry, frightened from its lair.

The falcon's relief at being unhooded, expressed by lifting, then clapping her wings against her sides, — her 'warbling,' as the falconers say, — is delightfully portrayed by Dante, though no effort of imagination suf-

awake her often by night, and always kindle the night-lamp until she is tamed, and arise always with her at dawn. Furthermore, keep her a month before thou lure her, and, when the month is gone, begin to test her in this way: Have some one opposite thee, and do thou take off her hood, and let the one opposite thee have a glove in hand, and therewith let him slap his thigh and call out lustily. And thou, who holdest the falcon in hand, shalt see whether she begins to look, or whether she notices anything; and, if she look or heed, do thus some days till she become accustomed. And always, when thou feedest her, in some way thou must cry out in order that she may get the habit. And when she hath begun to notice and to gaze, straightway begin to take her food away so that she may get right lean.'

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, s.v. 'Falconry.'



fices to see in her joy any resemblance to so vague a contrivance as the Heavenly Eagle.

*Quasi falcone ch' esce del cappello,  
Move la testa, e coll' ali si plaude,  
Voglia mostrando e facendosi bello,  
Vid' io farsi quel segno, che di laude,  
Della divina grazia era contesto,  
Con canti, quai si sa chi lassù gaude.*<sup>1</sup>

'Almost as a falcon, that issues from the hood, moves her head and beats her wings, showing her desire and making herself fine, I saw that standard become, which with praises was interwoven of grace divine, with such songs as he knows who there rejoices.'

The hood was hardly a novelty when Dante wrote, for it had been brought by Frederick II from the Orient some eighty or ninety years earlier. Hooding was not only of great practical value, but it did away after a while with a cruel custom which Dante may actually have seen.

In his book on falconry the Emperor describes minutely how falcons' eyes were seeled.<sup>2</sup> 'Now,' says he, 'after they have been caught, before you perch them on the hand, they must be seeled, and their claws must be blunted and jesses put on their feet, and a bell is to be tied to one foot and a varvel, if needs be, and a leash. Then, lest they see a man, their eyes should be closed, and this operation is called seeling; for, were their eyes not closed for them, the sight of a man or other un-

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* XIX, 34-39.

<sup>2</sup> *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus*, lib. II, cap. 37.

wonted things would make them wilder. . . . Now to seel is to keep the bird's eyes shut, with the lower lid pulled up to the brow. . . . If it be said that eyases [nestlings] need no seeling, since they are already almost accustomed to men and will keep pretty still, one may answer that eyases though they are, nevertheless they must be seeled; for by seeling they are more quickly and better tamed, kept healthier in limbs and feathers, and will more readily allow whatever must be done with them at the beginning.'

Frederick proceeds to explain how a thread was put through one lid from within, carefully, lest the needle pierce that film between lid and eye. He tells, also, how the needle should go through the lid halfway of its length, and how the thread was then drawn over the falcon's head and put through the lid of the other eye, whereupon both lids could be drawn up and the eyes closed, after which both ends of the thread were knotted together over the falcon's head, and her head feathers gently laid over the knot with a blunt needle so as to keep her from tearing herself with her claws. 'Seeling,' writes the Emperor, 'is helpful in many ways,'—and one of them is that the falcon does not thrash or 'bate,' as they say in falconry. These facts as to seeling make clear the nature and origin of an extraordinary penitence meted out to the envious by Dante, and are another evidence that man must attribute many of his own habits to God in imagining an after-world. What those habits are depends upon the environment, the epoch, and the race. Dante beheld the spirits that had envied, clad in sackcloth, and Heaven was stinting them of its light.

*E come agli orbi non approda il sole,  
 Così all' ombre, là v' io parlav' ora,  
 Luce del ciel di sè largir non vuole;  
 Chè a tutte un fil di ferro il ciglio fora,  
 E cuce sì, come a sparvier selvaggio  
 Si fa, però che queto non dimora.<sup>1</sup>*

And as unto the blind the sun comes not,  
 So to the shades, of whom just now I spake,  
 Heaven's light will not be bounteous of itself;  
 For all their lids an iron wire transpierces,  
 And sews them up, as to a sparrowhawk wild  
 Is done, because it will not quiet stay.

— LONGFELLOW.

Dante's most vigorous touches show the hawk in action, stooping to the quarry or grabbing another hawk. Certain devils have their clutches on a sinner, who of a sudden trickily slips away and dives into a pool of hot pitch. Alichino, a devil, dashes after him, and missing, grapples his fellow-devil Calcabrina.

*Quegli andò sotto,  
 E quei drizzò, volando, suso il petto:  
 Non altrimenti l' anitra di botto,  
 Quando il falcon s' appressa, giù s' attuffa.  
 Ed ei ritorna su crucciato e rotto.  
 Irato Calcabrina della buffa,  
 Volando dietro gli tenne, invaghito  
 Che quei campasse, per aver la zuffa.  
 E come il barattier fu disparito,*

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XIII, 67-72. Cf. *De Arte Venandi*, lib. II, cap. 45, where Frederick describes the hawk's bating, 'Est autem iuvativa ciliatura (seeling) ad multa, per ipsam enim falco non se inquietat,' etc.



A SPARROWHAWK CLUTCHING A PARTRIDGE

From E. B. Michell's *Art and Practice of Hawking*. By courtesy of Messrs Methuen & Co.





*Così volse gli artigli al suo compagno,  
E fu con lui sopra il fosso ghermito.  
Ma l' altro fu bene sparvier grifagno  
Ad artigliar ben lui, ed ambo e due  
Cadder nel mezzo del bogliente stagno.<sup>1</sup>*

‘The sinner went below; the other, flying, steered upward. Not otherwise the duck, of a sudden, when the falcon nears, dives down, and she returns angry and ruffled. Calcabrina, wroth at the jest, flying, kept behind him, bent that the sinner should get away for the scuffle’s sake. And, when the jobber was lost to sight, upon his companion he turned his claws and grappled him above the ditch. But the other, like a full-fledged sparrowhawk, clawed him well, and together they fell into the midst of the seething pool.’

Though a hungry falcon might stoop for a swimming duck, her action would be a misdemeanour, for it was a rule of falconry not to fly the falcon until her quarry was running or on the wing.<sup>2</sup> The situation in this instance is plainly that the duck makes for the water

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXII, 128–141.

<sup>2</sup> ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De Falconibus*, cap. 6, ‘Furthermore, this falcon is, above all, to be taught not to clutch the quarry in water, because there she is out of the falconer’s reach, and might be hurt. Therefore she must not be flown at the prey lengthwise of the water, but is to be held till the birds appear beyond the river bank aloft, and then the gerfalcon is to be flown from the waterside because through the gerfalcon’s flight they dare not return to the water. If, now, the gerfalcon is flown from the field then the birds make for the water or escape, and, if they be struck, fall into the water, and then the falcon following her prey is hurt or drowned, and if she gets off is made timid on account of her injury’ (*propter læsionem venationis*).

pursued by the falcon, which fails to give the duck a deadly clutch. In the tussle the falcon rumples her plumage;<sup>1</sup> then, unable to pursue her quarry into the water, she sweeps up wrathfully. One devil claws the other, as so often happens in falconry, when two hawks, stooping for the same prey, and both missing, turn in anger, clutch, and one hawk trusses the other with her long, dagger-like claws. Her ferocity is accurately described by Dante.

If any phase of animal existence is portrayed by Dante in a masterly way, it is to be found in his pictures of hawks; for he understood them well, and painted their portraits in a few entirely natural attitudes. In his treatment of this purely medieval theme Dante is distinctly modern. One will scarcely find more accurate observation in the superb poems of Leconte de Lisle.

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXII, 132, 'Ed ei ritorna su crucciato e rotto.' 'Rotto' is a technical term, and is, therefore, often mistranslated. Cf. *Liber de Curis Avium*, in *Scelta di Curios. Lett.*, vol. 140, p. 56, 'E senpre quando a lo sparviere sono piegate le penne, si dea soccorrere coll' acqua calda e colla banbagia, e menarla dolcemente sopra esse, e regenerannosi; inpercio che sozza cosa ene a colui che tene lo sparviere se l' uccello ene rotto.'

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### THE KITE

ANGERED at Charles II, Count of Anjou, Frederick of Aragon, and other princes and tyrants whose politics displeased him, Dante cries out that it would be better for them to fly low like a swallow, than like a kite to make lofty circles over things most vile.<sup>1</sup> It is not clear whether Dante transfers his loathing of human baseness to the kite. The tendency to detest such animals as vary most from human standards was commoner in Dante's time than now. In the kite Dante sees a confusion of things; it flies far up toward Heaven, but is simply making ready to swoop down on carrion.

Hugo of St. Victor berates the scavenger and robber of hen-roosts with all the ferocity of which his dubious similitudes and unconvincing allegory are capable,<sup>2</sup> and a French design of the thirteenth (?) century represents Gluttony by a youth seated on a wolf with a kite ('mulvus'), Gluttony's emblem, perched on his left hand. 'Gluttony,' reads the legend, 'is like to a youth astride a wolf bearing in his hand a kite.'<sup>3</sup> Dante has caught

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* IV, vi, 187-190, 'Meglio sarebbe a voi come rondine volare basso, che come nibbio altissime rote fare sopra cose vilissime.'

<sup>2</sup> *De Bestiis*, lib. I, cap. 40.

<sup>3</sup> *Chasse de St. Taurin d'Evreux*. See CAHIER, *Mélanges*, vol. II, p. 26.

the two main traits of the kite, namely, that he makes very lofty circles and makes them over things most vile. Probably the image-loving poet had watched this phenomenon long before he got a chance to use it against tyrants and disappointing kings.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kites, of course, were common in Italy then as now, and could not have failed to be familiar to every one. The word *nibbio* is probably due to a confusion through popular etymology of *milvus* and *nebula*, for the kite flies near the clouds.



Ce est le eagle

From a medieval design. After Cahier

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### THE EAGLE

THE eagle's lofty flight and lightning-like plunge, its keen, far-reaching vision, and its function as an heraldic, imperial, or mystic emblem, are treated by Dante mostly in a medieval fashion, and he adds to these qualities certain magical elements such as may have entered his mind from folklore or from dreams.

The superstition that the eagle can look unblinded into the sun is as old as Aristotle,<sup>1</sup> may be found in scores of medieval writers,<sup>2</sup> and is perpetuated by

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Animal.* IX, 45. Aristotle tells how the sea eagle forces his eaglets to gaze at the sun, and goes on to say that if one of them is unwilling he beats him, makes him turn despite himself, and kills the one whose eyes weep first.

<sup>2</sup> See LAUCHERT, *Gesch. des Physiol.* pp. 19, 172. CAHIER, *Mélanges*, II, 94-97, 168. POPE GREGORY, *Altbургundische Uebersetzung der Predigten Gregors über Ezechiel*, ed. by K. Hofmann, p. 29, 'Car quant il mist son entente en la sustance de la diviniteit, si ficht il assi cum selonc la costume daisle ses oilz el soloil.' On the bronze doors of the cathedral at Pisa may be seen an eagle mounting to the sun.



Dante. In the sphere of fire he saw Beatrice gazing into the sun.

‘Almost such a passage had made morning there and evening here; and there all that hemisphere was white, and the other part black, when I saw Beatrice turned upon the left side, and looking into the sun; never did eagle so fix himself upon it. And even as a second ray is wont to issue from the first and mount upward again, like a pilgrim who wishes to return; thus of her action, infused through the eyes into my imagination, mine was made, and I fixed my eyes upon the sun beyond our use.’<sup>1</sup> — NORTON.

Thus Dante gains a fresh strength of vision, greater than would come to a man from the mere renewal of youth, although he seems to have been influenced both by the legend of the eagle’s rejuvenation and of its supernatural ability to stare into the sun. The ‘Physiologus’ declares that man, when the eyes of his heart are darkened, should rise to Christ, the sun of righteousness, and renew his youth in the fount of everlasting life, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.<sup>2</sup> Dante recurs to this legend of the magic sight in an apostrophe to Hyperion:—

The aspect of thy son, Hyperion,  
Here I sustained, and saw how move themselves  
Around and near him Maia and Dione.<sup>3</sup>

The wonderful vision of mortal eagles is mentioned also by the Heavenly Eagle, who says:—

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* I, 43-54.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. LAUCHERT, *op. cit.* p. 172.

<sup>3</sup> *Parad.* XXII, 142-144.

'The part in me which sees and bears the sun  
In mortal eagles,' it began to me,  
'Now fixedly must needs be looked upon.'<sup>1</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

As the eagle of Aristotle and later authors tests its young, casting away those that cannot endure the glare of the sun; so Beatrice or 'Theology,' leading Dante up to God, like the mother eagle, looks unflinchingly into its rays, and Dante is able also to bear the glow of the sun, which to him so often means God.

Though the eagle's strength of vision is unwittingly exaggerated by Dante, he is evidently only rhetorical in advising fools who are geese by nature to desist from emulating the star-sweeping eagle.<sup>2</sup> This fling at poetasters becomes a sublime compliment when Dante records his meeting in the nether world with Homer, sovereign poet, Horace, Ovid, Lucan, and Virgil.

*Così vidi adunar la bella scuola  
Di quei signor dell' altissimo canto,  
Che sopra gli altri com' aquila<sup>3</sup> vola.<sup>4</sup>*

Thus saw I gathered the fair school  
Of those lords of loftiest song,  
That o'er the others like an eagle flies.

A conventional image was perhaps never more grandiosely beautiful.

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* XX, 31-33.

<sup>2</sup> *De V. E.* II, iv, 80-82, '... a tanta præsuntuositate desistant, et si anseres naturali desidia sunt, nolint astripetam aquilam imitari.'

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the *Virginal* (559), where an embassy says to a hero, 'Ir varnt den rîtern obe als obe dem falken tuot der adelar.' Cited by Lüning, p. 182.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* IV, 94-96.

Nature and heraldry are powerfully mingled in Dante's words on Guido da Polenta, whose family had been lords of Ravenna since 1270, and were hovering in 1300 over Cervia. The arms of the Polenta family, according to Benvenuto da Imola,<sup>1</sup> were an eagle, half argent on a field azure, half gules on a field or, wherefore Dante can utter these words to the soul of Guido da Montefeltro :—

*Ravenna sta come stata è molti anni;  
L' aquila da Polenta là si cova,  
Sì che Cervia ricopre co' suoi vanni.*<sup>2</sup>

Ravenna stands as it long years has stood ;  
The eagle of Polenta there is brooding,  
So that she covers Cervia with her vans.<sup>3</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

Here the outlying domain is covered with the flight-feathers, but elsewhere the princely eagle is like to

<sup>1</sup> BENVENUTO DA IMOLA, ' . . . illi de Polenta portant pro insignio aquilam, cuius medietas est alba in campo azurro, et alia medietas est rubea, in campo aureo.' J. WOODWARD, *Heraldry, British and Foreign*, I, p. 268, gives the Polenta arms thus, 'Per pale or and azure, an eagle per pale gules and argent.' See LITTA, *Famiglie Celebri Italiane*. Litta apparently gets his authority from MARCANTONIO GINANNI, *L' Arte del Blasone*.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XXVII, 40-42.

<sup>3</sup> JACOPO DELLA LANA, 'Sono le penne delle ali presso alle piume ed estreme, che sono appellate coltelli.' FREDERICK II, *De Arte Venandi*, I, cap. 50, defines the *vanni* or flight-feathers at length and scientifically, 'Numerus itaque pennarum in unaquaque ala est viginti sex, quatuor magis propinquæ corpori, quæ dicuntur vani, . . . demum versus extremitatem alæ aliæ sunt decem, quæ forinsecæ dici possunt.' Therefore the vans are not the extreme outer feathers. Dante, of course, uses the word *vanni* figuratively, — a part for the whole, as we say 'pinions.'

descend. And see how Dante threatens the infamous Florentines! 'In what,' he cries, 'will it profit you to have surrounded yourselves with a wall, to have fortified yourselves with ramparts and battlements, when the eagle, terrible in a field of gold, swoops down on you, — the eagle who, now sailing over the Pyrenees, now over the Caucasus, now over Atlas, the more strengthened by the opposition of the host of heaven, of old looked down upon the vast seas as no hindrance to his flight?'<sup>1</sup> It may be that this eagle, 'terrible in a field of gold,' was the heraldic imperial eagle, issuant and crowned, on a field or.<sup>2</sup>

In another Latin letter, written between September, 1310, and January, 1311, Dante cries out, 'Lay aside, O Lombard race, thy accumulated barbarity; and if any vestige of the seed of the Trojans and Latins still exists, give it place, lest when the sublime eagle, descending like a thunderbolt, falls from on high, he may see his eaglets cast out and the nest of his own young occupied by ravens.'<sup>3</sup> How could Dante better ennoble the eagle? Yet, elsewhere, the imperial eagle is converted into a demon of such extraordinary force as to rock the very church by the ferocity of its onslaught.

Never descended with so swift a motion  
 Fire from a heavy cloud, when it is raining  
 From out the region which is most remote,  
 As I beheld the bird of Jove descend  
 Down through the tree rending away the bark,

<sup>1</sup> *Epist.* VI, iii, 79–85. Latham's translation.

<sup>2</sup> WOODWARD, *Heraldry, British and Foreign*, II, 165.

<sup>3</sup> *Epist.* V, iv, 50–56. Latham's translation.



As well as blossom and the foliage new,  
 And he with all his might the chariot smote  
 Whereat it reeled, like vessel in a tempest  
 Tossed by the waves, now starboard, and now larboard.<sup>1</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

Time flies in dreams; centuries are mere seconds; in a twinkling the mighty head of the Roman Empire has become a Christian, and the destroying eagle of Dante's vision swoops down to the Car of the Church once more, for thus the allegorising poet symbolises the donation of Constantine.

Then by the way that it before had come,  
 Into the chariot's chest I saw the eagle  
 Descend, and leave it feathered with his plumes.<sup>2</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XXXII, 109-117. HUGO OF ST. VICTOR, *De Bestiis*, lib. II, cap. 56, 'Aquila ab acumine oculorum vocata. Tanti enim visus aut contuitus esse dicitur, ut cum super maria immobili penna feratur, ita ut humanis pateat obtutibus, de tanta sublimitate pisciculos natare videat, ac *turbinis instar* discendens raptam prædam pennis ad littus pertrahat. Nam et contra radium solis fertur obtutum non flectere, unde et pullos suos ungue suspensos, radiis solis obiicit, et quos viderit immobilem tenere aciem et dignos genere, conservat; si quos vero perspexerit reflectere obtutum, quasi degeneres abiicit. Unde beatus Gregorius: Aquilæ vocabulo in Scriptura sacra aliquando maligne spiritus raptores animarum, aliquando præsentis sæculi potestates, aliquando vero vel subtilissimæ sanctorum intelligentiæ, vel incarnatus Dominus, ima celeriter transvolans, et mox summa repetens designatur.' Cf. Ezekiel xvii, 3, 'Aquila grandis magnarum alarum, longo membrorum ductu, plena plumis et varietate, venit ad Libanum et tulit medullam cedri, et summitatem frondium eius evulsit.' Psalm cii, 5, 'Renovabitur ut aquilæ juvenus tua.' Cf. also LAUCHERT, *Geschichte des Physiologus*, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* XXXII, 124-126. For other developments of 'Imperial Eagle,' cf. *Parad.* VI, 1-8, 68 ff., 95; *De Mon.* II, xi, 25.



The black art could hardly surpass such magic dreams; but elsewhere Dante himself shares in an adventure rivalling that of Ganymede and the bird of Jove, or of Sinbad and the Rok.

Dreaming, I seemed to see in heaven suspended  
 An eagle that with golden plumes did shine  
 And with spread wings, as he to swoop intended :  
 And in that place it seemed to be, methought  
 Where Ganymede, abandoning his own,  
 Was up to heaven's high consistory caught.  
 Then I considered : ' Haply here alone  
 His wont to strike is, and he scorns elsewhere  
 To bear up what he snatches in his feet.'  
 Methought he next wheeled somewhat in the air,  
 Then struck like lightning, terrible and fleet,  
 And rapt me up to the empyrean, there  
 We burned together in so fierce a heat  
 And such of that imagined fire the smart, —  
 My dream perforce was by the scorching broke.<sup>1</sup>

— PARSONS.

Thus Dante is snatched up from a flowery dale of Purgatory to the Heaven of the Moon by Santa Lucia, whom his dramatically fantastic dream has transformed into a huge apocalyptic, half-heraldic eagle. But the influence of medieval heraldry is undeniably present when Dante sees the rigid gold eagles of the imperial Romans *waving* in Trajan's banners.

*Intorno a lui pareva calcato e pieno  
 Di cavalieri, e l' aquile nell' oro  
 Sopra' esso in vista al vento si movieno.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* IX, 19-33.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* X, 79-81.

About him seemed to be a throng of horsemen  
 And the eagles in the gold above him  
 In full view were fluttering on the wind.

No crowd of Romans are these, but a troop of medieval knights with eagles on their banners in a field or. The medieval spirit is seen, however, at its extreme in the Heavenly Eagle which Dante designs with the souls of the blessed, and there can be little doubt that our poet got his hint for this symbolical configuration from a legend of the cranes.

The spirits, imagined as lights or flames, formed in Dante's vision the letters D I L (DILIGITE IUSTITIAM), and remained awhile in M (the last letter of QUI IUDICATIS TERRAM); then thousands of sparks arose:—

Even as the sun that lights them had allotted;  
 And, each one being quiet in its place,  
 The head and neck beheld I of an eagle  
 Delineated by that inlaid fire.<sup>1</sup>

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

The other beatitude, that contented seemed  
 At first to bloom a lily on the M,  
 By a slight motion followed out the imprint,  
 O gentle star! what and how many gems  
 Did demonstrate to me, that all our justice  
 Effect is of the heaven which thou ingemmest!<sup>2</sup>

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

Appeared before me with its wings outspread  
 The beautiful image that in sweet fruition  
 Made jubilant the interwoven souls;  
 Appeared a little ruby each, wherein  
 Ray of the sun was burning, so enkindled

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* XVIII, 105–108.

<sup>2</sup> *Parad.* XVIII, 112–117.

That each into mine eyes refracted it.  
 And what it now behooves me to retrace  
 Nor voice has e'er reported nor ink written,  
 Nor was by fantasy e'er comprehended ;  
 For speak I saw and likewise heard the beak  
 And utter with its voice both I and My,  
 When it was in conception We and Our.<sup>1</sup>

— LONGFELLOW.

Though lovers of allegorical mechanisms may once have relished such a conception as this, the modern mind grows weary, so weary as to be relieved by the incongruous actions of the Heavenly Eagle, whose internal performances, executed by the Spirits, Dante compares to a falcon beating its wings and making itself beautiful,<sup>2</sup> then to a tender stork-mother over her nestful of storklets,<sup>3</sup> and finally, to a lark that sweeps joyfully through the air and sings.<sup>4</sup> The Heavenly Eagle is a subject for scholarly diagrams<sup>5</sup> rather than a thing of beauty.

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* XIX, 1-12.

<sup>2</sup> *Parad.* XIX, 34-36.

<sup>3</sup> *Parad.* XIX, 91-93.

<sup>4</sup> *Parad.* XX, 73-75. Cf. also XX, 25, 31.

<sup>5</sup> See TOYNBEE, *Dante Dictionary*, s.v. 'Aquila.'

## CHAPTER XL

### THE CROW

THE crow, destroyer of carrion and crops, had a worse reputation in the Middle Ages than now. St. Ambrose, for instance, devotes a whole chapter to the crow's impiety in not returning to the Ark when he found nowhere any dry land. Besides, this bird has the diabolical hue. 'If truly all shamelessness and sin is dark and gloomy, and feeds on the dead like the crow, yet virtue is close to the light, shining with the mind's purity and simplicity.' So speaks St. Ambrose.<sup>1</sup>

When Dante declares that he excludes from his reckoning those who, decked in the feathers of crows, boast that they are white sheep in the Lord's flock,<sup>2</sup> he is virtually turning inside out the scriptural phrase as to the wolves in sheeps' clothing, or is curiously revamping the fable of a crow that donned the cast-off feathers of a peacock.<sup>3</sup>

There is another more puzzling phrase in Dante's letter to all Italians, for he bids those of Lombard blood to lay aside their savagery and yield to the Emperor, lest he, swooping down like an eagle, find his eaglets cast out and their place possessed by little crows.<sup>4</sup> Such an oc-

<sup>1</sup> *De Noe et Arca*, cap. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *De Mon.* III, iii, 116-118.

<sup>3</sup> See WARNKE, *Die Fabeln der Marie de France*, p. 217, 'De corvo pennas pavonis inveniente.'

<sup>4</sup> *Epist.* V, iv, 50-56.

currence would certainly make an epoch in the annals of the Animal Kingdom. The cuckoo's habit is well known, but how did Dante come to suspect such villany of crows? In fables animals frequently abandon their natural habits for the sake of man's morals; yet no fable suggests itself as the basis of Dante's idea.<sup>1</sup> It may be that our poet meant simply to imagine such a case, or that he knew some legend of the eagle and the crow which has failed to survive in literature.

<sup>1</sup> My opinion is confirmed by a letter from Dr. K. McKenzie.



## CHAPTER XLI

### THE LARK

WHEN the princely lovers of justice in the twentieth canto of Paradise have stopped singing, there rises through the neck of the Mystic Eagle a murmur like the sound of a cithern or a bagpipe. The Eagle speaks, praising Hezekiah, Constantine, William, son of Robert Guiscard, and Rhipeus, 'the one justest man and heedfullest among the Trojans'; but the poet Dante, discarding with sudden emotion the moralising, biographical tone, bursts into one of the most beautiful touches of life in literature.

*Quale allodetta<sup>1</sup> che in aere si spazia  
Prima cantando, e poi tace, contenta  
Dell' ultima dolcezza che la sazia,  
Tal mi sembiò l' imago della impronta*

<sup>1</sup> Albertus Magnus (1193-1280) devoted a goodly volume to the animals, including man. In *De Animalibus*, lib. XXIII, tract. unicus, occurs a remarkable description of the lark, containing some features noticed by Bernart de Ventadorn and unmentioned by Dante, or mentioned by Dante and left untouched by Bernart de Ventadorn: 'Mas eius musicus est valde et multæ modulationis, æstatem primo inter aves prænuntians, et diem in aurora promens laude cantus sui, pluvias et tempestates abhorret, accipitrem tantum timet, quod fugit in hominum sinus et manus, vel in terra sedens permittit se capi: cantat ascendendo per circulum volans: et cum descendit, primo quidem paulatim descendit, et tandem alas ad se convertens in modum lapidis subito decedit et in illo casu cantum dimittit.'

*Dell' eterno piacere, al cui disio  
Ciascuna cosa, quale ell' è, diventa.*<sup>1</sup>

Like the dear lark that in the air sweeps widely  
First singing, and then is silent with content  
Of the last sweetness that doth sate him ;  
Such seemed to me the image of the imprint  
Of the Everlasting Pleasure, by whose will  
Are fashioned all things that are.

The lark's unusual flight, the moment of its song, its silence and joyful satiety, — all these are described with wonderful truth, brevity, and power. There is no conventional foisting on the lark of such human moods as medieval poets were wont to think into the nightingale. Yet these three exquisite lines scarcely betoken on Dante's part a special observation of nature, for they are almost certainly borrowed from a description by Bernart de Ventadorn.<sup>2</sup>

*Quant vey la lauzeta mover  
de joi sas alas contral ray,  
que s'oblida e's layssa cazer  
per la doussor qu'al cor li vai,  
ai! tan grans enveja m'en ve  
de cui qu'eu vey iauzion!  
meravilhas ai, quar desse  
lo cor de desirier no'm fon.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* XX, 73-78.

<sup>2</sup> For the first printed reference to this passage, see MOORE, *Studies in Dante*, Second Series, note 5, p. 363.

<sup>3</sup> For the citation from Bernart de Ventadorn, who flourished, according to Suchier, from about 1148 to 1195, see RAYNOUARD, *Choix*, vol. III, p. 68. A better text, however, and the one quoted, is to be found in APPEL'S *Provençalische Chrestomathie*, No. 17. A

‘When I see the little lark move blithely his wings up toward the sun ; that in rapture he allows himself to fall, through the bliss that enters his heart, ah ! such great envy comes upon me of whomever I see joyful ! A wonder it is that straightway my heart for longing does not melt away.’

The comparison of these two passages is interesting, not only because we must feel that Dante knew and relished the work of Bernart de Ventadorn, who, apparently, is nowhere else directly or indirectly quoted by Dante, whom Dante does not even mention by name, but also because it throws light on the ethics of medieval men of letters. As is generally acknowledged now, there can be no question of plagiarism. Any poet, and all the encyclopedists, practised openly and without reluctance the maxim long afterward attributed to Molière.

The image, then, is almost certainly borrowed from Bernart de Ventadorn ; yet Dante, as always, added something of his own. *Imitando creò*. By greater accuracy in describing the lark’s flight, and by giving a reason for its happiness, he seems to widen the range of his psychological vision, penetrating for an instant into the heart of a creature farther beyond ourselves than are our fellow-men.

Though often caught with falcons or snares, larks were plentiful in the gunless days of Dante and of Bernart de Ventadorn ; but men who could dwell with

good translation by the poet and philologist, FRIEDRICH DIEZ, may be read on page 31 of his *Leben und Werke der Troubadours*, 2d edition.

such loving comprehension on the facts of a nature ever visible and almost never seen merit for that alone our gratitude.

*Chè suole a riguardar giovare altrui.*

— *Purg.* IV, 54.

## CHAPTER XLII

### THE NIGHTINGALE

THAT Dante follows the Greek rather than the Latin legend as to Philomela and Procne is obvious. The 'early woes' of the swallow of which our poet tells<sup>1</sup> are consistent with the story of Philomela. Again, to revenge herself on her faithless husband Tereus, Procne slew her son Itys, and served up the boy's flesh to his father, for which impious wickedness she was changed into a nightingale.<sup>2</sup> Hence our poet means this bird and not the swallow when he says : —

*Dell' empiezza di lei, che mutò forma  
Nell' uccel che a cantar più si diletta,  
Nell' imagine mia apparve l' orma.*<sup>3</sup>

Of her impiety who changed her form  
Into the bird that most delights in singing,  
In my imagining appeared the trace.

— LONGFELLOW.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* IX, 15. See chapter on 'The Swallow,' p. 312.

<sup>2</sup> OVID'S *Met.* VI, 412 ff., 639-641. Ovid leaves the identification to us, but the fury of Procne he mentions again and again : 'Procne furiis agitata doloris' (vs. 595) ; 'Ardeat, et iram Non capit ipsa suam Procne' (609) ; 'Triste parat facinus, tacita exæstuat ira' (623) ; 'infracta constitit ira' (627) ; 'scelus est pietas in coniuge Tereo' (635) ; 'Dissimulare nequit crudelia gaudia Procne' (653). For this and further proof see MOORE, *Studies in Dante*, First Series, p. 210.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* XVII, 19-21.



Thus, then, the nightingale (which, in Dante's time and before, had been warbling a rather stale tune to so many troubadours and minnesingers) is 'the bird that most delights in singing.' Though some bird lovers might charge Dante with partiality, all will own that he has in this case set forth gracefully one of the truths that link the higher orders of the animal kingdom.

## CHAPTER XLIII

### THE DOVE

IN the Song of Solomon the raptures of an Oriental poet are poured forth in bursts of passion, or uttered in the tone of a dreaming sensualist in whom a dim, an almost indiscernible background of religion can be felt at times. But only the most intensely allegorical spirit, the most unwavering belief that the Bible conceals beneath all its legends and fancies an intentional moral or prophetic aim, could pervert the Song of Solomon into a truly religious poem or a theological rhapsody. This spirit, however, and this belief held in sway during the Middle Ages the minds of nearly all. If theologians still seek the 'mutual love of Christ and His Church' and other such undreamed-of themes in this pastoral lyric, no wonder that an age entirely in the hold of mysticism and allegory should have gone farther still in misreading the spirit of the East. 'The empyrean heaven,' writes Dante, 'is through its peace like unto the divine Science, which is all peace. Of this Science, saith Solomon, "three-score are the queens and fourscore the fond concubines and of the grown handmaids there is no number; one is my dove and my perfect one." All sciences he calls queens and concubines and handmaids; and this [the divine Science, — Theology] he calls dove, because

it is without stain of strife ; and this he calls perfect, for perfectly it makes us see the Truth in which our soul has peace.'<sup>1</sup>

So the one whom the writer of Solomon's Song calls 'my dove, my undefiled,' has become to our Christian poet the symbol of Theology conceived with strange, yes, superhuman objectivity as a thing 'all peace.'

It is needless to query how the dove became so unnatural. Our poet accepts the symbol that pleased his time.

Once more the dove is to serve as an image of purity and affection, for in the Starry Heaven there appears to our poet and Beatrice a 'light' which is the angelic condition of St. James. When St. James meets St. Peter, whom Dante has described as 'a blessed fire,' 'light eternal,' 'love enkindled,'<sup>2</sup> there occurs between these two disembodied worthies a greeting whose fervour leads our poet into the most one-sided simile in the world.

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* II, xv, 165-168, and 174-184: 'Ancora lo cielo empireo, per la sua pace, simiglia la divina Scienza ['divinity'] che piena è di tutta pace; . . . Di costei dice Salomone: "Sessanta sono le regine, e ottanta l'amiche concubine; e drude e ancelle; e questa chiama colomba perchè è senza macola di lite; e questa chiama perfetta, perchè perfettamente ne fa il Vero vedere, nel quale si cheta l'anima nostra."' Cf. this very early translation with the Vulgate: 'Sexaginta sunt reginæ, et octaginta concubinæ, et adolescentularum non est numerus. Una est columba mea, perfecta mea.' Cf. the Vulgate with its earliest entire translation into Tuscan: 'Sessanta sono le regine, e LXXX le concubine; e delle giovinette vi sono senza numero. Una è la colomba mia, una è laperfetta mia.' (From *La Bibbia Volgare*, according to the rare edition of 1471.)

<sup>2</sup> 'Fuoco benedetto,' *Parad.* XXIV, 31; 'luce eterna,' vs. 34; 'amore acceso,' vs. 82. Cf. pp. 291 (*ad fin.*)-292 (*ad init.*).

*Sì come quando il colombo si pone  
 Presso al compagno, e l' uno all' altro pande,  
 Girando e mormorando, l' affezione,  
 Così vid' io l' un dall' altro grande  
 Principe glorioso essere accolto,  
 Laudando il cibo che lassù li prande.<sup>1</sup>*

In the same way as when a dove alights  
 Near his companion, both of them pour forth,  
 Circling about and murmuring, their affection,  
 So one beheld I by the other grand  
 Prince glorified to be with welcome greeted,  
 Lauding the food that there above is eaten.

— LONGFELLOW.

Though Dante uses the words *sì come* ('just as'), there is no more similitude than between a yoke of oxen and a ray of sunlight; but the description of the doves is lovely. It is one of those everyday sights which happen at last to be seen by a master accurately in every detail. The wheeling of enamoured doves, their gloating affection, the very softness of their cooing, are all both pictured and heard in these vivid, onomatopoetic lines.

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* XXV, 19-24. HUGO OF ST. VICTOR says, in his *De Bestiis*, lib. I, cap. 11 ('De diversis columbæ proprietatibus'), 'Instat osculis quia delectatur in multitudine pacis.' And OVID, *Ars Amat.* II, vi, 56: —  
 'Oscula dat cupido blanda columba mari.'

According to the interpretation of RABANUS MAURUS, the wild pigeon is chaste: 'Palumbes avis casta ex moribus appellatur, quod comes sit castitatis' (*De Universo*, VIII, 6).

BRUNETTO LATINI says, 'E sachiez que la torterele est si aimable vers son compaignon que se il est perduz par aucune maniere, ele ne quiert jamais autre mari, et garde sa foi, ou par vertu de chasteeé, ou porce que ele cuide que ses maris viegne' (*Tresor*, p. 220).

There is in our poet another equally pleasing and original portrayal of doves in a moment familiar to those who see nature. Casella has been singing to the more corporeal spirits in Purgatory Dante's canzone,

*Amor che nella mente mi ragiona.*

All are absorbed in the song; when, suddenly, Cato appears, and, on his chiding them for dallying, the spirits move swiftly away.

*Come quando, cogliendo biado o loglio,  
Li colombi adunati alla pastura,  
Queti senza mostrar l'usato orgoglio,  
Se cosa appare ond'elli abbian paura,  
Subitamente lasciano star l'esca,  
Perchè assaliti da maggior cura :  
Così vid'io quella masnada fresca  
Lasciar lo canto, e gire in ver la costa,  
Come uom che va, nè sa dove riesca ;  
Nè la nostra partita fu men tosta.<sup>1</sup>*

As doves (when busy gathering grains or tares,  
Clustered at pasture in a single flock,  
Quiet, nor showing their accustomed airs),  
If aught approach the timid tribe to shock,  
Fly from their food, assailed by greater care,  
So quit their song, this new-come troop, and started  
Hillward, like one who goes unknowing where;  
And with no less a pace, we, too, departed.

— PARSONS.

As Dante makes of the lion both demon and king, so in his doves are embodied two psychic types of popular tradition. The one type, which is mainly Biblical,

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* II, 124-133.



accepts them as pure; the other, which is mainly 'classic,' represents them as the emblem of sensuality.<sup>1</sup> The second type is suggested in the famous episode of Francesca da Rimini.

In the second abyss of Hell, amongst the shades of the lustful, whose flight the poet has already compared to that of cranes and starlings, Dante sees the unresisting Francesca and her Paolo. Wishing to speak to them, he appeals to Virgil, who bids him beseech them by the love that carries them on, and they will come.

*Sì tosto come il vento a noi li piega,  
Mossi la voce : O anime affannate,  
Venite a noi parlar, s' altri nol niega.  
Quali colombe dal disio chiamate,  
Con l' ali alzate e ferme, al dolce nido  
Volan per l' aer dal voler portate :<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> A shrine of St. Taurin d'Evreuz represents Lust as a woman mounted on a goat, with a dove on her left hand. Over the design is the legend, 'Lecherie ressemble une dame chivachant sur une chievre portant en sa main une colombe.' — CAHIER, *Mélanges*, II, 29.

<sup>2</sup> In putting a colon after *portate* rather than after *aer*, I have followed Witte, whose punctuation is adopted in the Oxford Dante and by TOYNBEE (*La Commedia di Dante Alighieri*, London, 1900). Scartazzini's note on vs. 84 is not only without critical value, but his reading mars the beauty of the whole passage. Now as to *voler*. GIOVANNI DUPRÈ (*Ricordi autobiografici*, Florence, Le Monnier, 1879, cap. VIII, p. 140) reports that Giuseppe Giusti, on hearing these verses recited, interrupted with a declaration that the punctuation was wrong, since it absurdly attributed to the doves not only the desire (*desio*), which was reasonable enough, but also the will (*voler*). The same observation had been made as early as 1825 by LUIGI MUZZI in his *Epistola contenente la nuova esposizione di un luogo del Petrarca e di alcuni di Dante*. If these two Dantists (and Scartazzini) had followed the method of explaining Dante by Dante, they would not

*Cotali uscir della schiera ov' è Dido,  
A noi venendo per l' aer maligno,  
Sì forte fu l' affettuoso grido.<sup>1</sup>*

'As soon as the wind had swayed them toward us I spoke: "O wearied souls, come speak with us, if none forbid." As doves impelled by longing, with wings lifted and still, fly through the air to their sweet nest, borne on by the will; so they issued from the swarm wherein is Dido, to us coming through the baleful air, so strong was the affectionate cry.'

There can be no question here of Dante's observation of the physical phenomenon, since this image is borrowed, in part at least, almost word for word from Virgil.<sup>2</sup> Virgil had accurately noted how birds hold their wings still before alighting after a long flight, but Virgil's

have mishandled the text of the *D. C.* Dante does not deny to the animals will, but reason and free will. To be sure, Dante's own position is untenable, but that is another matter. That *voler* does not necessarily mean free will is obvious. See *Inf.* XXXII, 76; *Purg.* XXVII, 121. In *Purg.* XVI, 76, occurs *libero voler*, but *voler* without a qualifier can mean free will, *Purg.* XI, 10. *Voglia* has also both meanings. See *FAY, Concordance*.

For a clear statement of the conventional theological point of view, see *VERNON, Readings, Inferno*, vol. I, pp. 157-158.

Since the MSS. are not punctuated, the place of the colon must be determined by the individual editor's opinion, or by a theory arrived at after study of all Dantesque passages referring to animals. To me the question seems not soluble.

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* V, 79-87.

<sup>2</sup> *Æn.* V, 213-217:—

'*Qualis spelunca subito commota columba,  
Cui domus et dulces latebroso in pumice nidi,  
Fertur in arva volans plausumque exterrita pennis  
Dat tecto ingentem, mox aere lapsa quieto  
Radit iter liquidum celeres neque commovet alas.*'

doves are likened to a ship which, having run upon a rock, is thrust off again and glides smoothly out upon the open sea. Not only, therefore, is his picture less vivid than Dante's, but it lacks the emotions imparted by the presence of two living things, the doves and the woful lovers, instead of one, the frightened doves of Virgil. In Virgil the comparison is pretty; in Dante it is beautiful. Is what Dante adds true? To answer that question involves a mystery which generally thwarts the most skilful experiments of psychology: How far have other animals emotions and purposes like our own? Has Dante gone too far in giving his doves a will? Is the poet belying his own dogmas? The last two questions deserve an unhesitating No, for in Dante the word *voler* (vs. 84) means will, not free will, and therefore the poet has not even unwittingly sinned against a cherished formula.

The birds of the Love goddess are thus described by Virgil (*Æn.* VI, 190-192):—

*Vix ea fatus erat, geminæ cum forte columbæ  
Ipsi sub ora viri cælo venere volantes  
Et viridi sedere solo.*

In this passage Æneas speaks and the doves come as if at his bidding.

Again (*Æn.* VI, 199-203):—

*Pascentes illae tantum prodire volando,  
Quantum acie possent oculi servare sequentum.  
Inde ubi venere ad fauces grave olentis Averni,  
Tollunt se celeres liquidumque per æra lapsæ  
Sedibus optatis gemina super arbore sidunt.*

Compare also the words in Isaiah (lx, 8), 'Who are these that fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?' (*Qui sunt isti, qui ut nubes volant, et quæ columbæ ad fenestras suas?*)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For further treatment of the Virgilian passages, see EDWARD MOORE, *Studies*, First Series, pp. 184-185.

## CHAPTER XLIV

### THE STARLING

To cast before our mind's eye a vision of lost souls driven onward forever, swept along by the blast in Hell, even as they had been swept onward in the upper life to the end of their passions, Dante uses an image of extraordinary power. These beaten, whirling souls of the lustful damned are countless,—scarcely to be distinguished as individuals, made dusky by the gloom.

*La bufera infernal che mai non resta,  
Mena gli spirti con la sua rapina,  
Voltando e percotendo li molesta.  
Quando giungon davanti alla ruina,  
Quivi le strida, il compianto e il lamento,  
Bestemmian quivi la virtù divina.  
Intesi che a così fatto tormento  
Enno dannati i peccator carnali,  
Che la ragion sommettono al talento.  
E come gli stornei<sup>1</sup> ne portan l' ali*

<sup>1</sup> Not diminutive in meaning. 'Storno' is the simple form, but VINCENZO TANARO (*Scelta di Curios. Lett.* vol. 217, p. 191) speaks of 'i stornelli giovani,' and FREDERICK II (*De A. V. cum A.* I, cap. 18) uses 'sturnelli' (= Dante's *stornei*) as equivalent to 'sturni.' In Dante's time, starlings were very common. TANARO (*loc. cit.*) tells how they appeared on the roofs of the dovecotes in spring, and left when the olives were ripe. Cf. also, FREDERICK II, *op. cit.*, *passim*.



*Nel freddo tempo, a schiera larga e piena,  
Così quel fiato gli spiriti mali.  
Di qua, di là, di giù, di su gli mena :  
Nulla speranza gli conforta mai,  
Non che di posa ma di minor pena.<sup>1</sup>*

The infernal blast, which never knoweth rest  
In furious wreck whirls on the shadowy forms,  
Driving and madly dashing them along ;  
And when destruction's very brink they reach,  
Then shriek, then scream and yell the frantic throng,  
Yea, Heaven's High King blaspheme with horrid speech !  
Such pangs, I found, those carnal sinners feel  
Who to low impulses their reason bowed.  
And, like as starlings in the winter wheel  
Their airy flight, a large wide-wavering crowd,  
So that fierce gust these erring spirits blows  
This way and that way, up and down the cope ;  
Nor can they find, I say not of repose,  
But of diminished pain, one moment's hope.

— PARSONS.

Though Dante, without the shadow of a doubt, borrowed the plan of this simile from Virgil,<sup>2</sup> who likens the swept souls on the banks of Acheron to a swarm of birds driven in the chilly part of the year to sunny climates over sea, Dante has shown how to add the master touch. He deals not in generalities, but with a few swift strokes he throws before the eye a definite

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* V, 31-45.

<sup>2</sup> *Æn.* VI, 308-312 : —

' Quam multa in silvis autumni frigore primo  
Lapsa cadunt folia, aut ad terram gurgite ab alto  
Quam multæ glomerantur aves, ubi frigidus annus  
Trans pontum fugat et terris immittit apricis.'

truth in nature.<sup>1</sup> For critic or commentator to spend more words clarifying such art would certainly be holding a lantern to the sun.

<sup>1</sup> Any observer of nature has noticed our American 'blackbirds,' which fly precisely like the two hundred odd species of European starlings. The various starlings differ greatly in colouring, but in shape and size they resemble our catbird. A note to letter XLVIII of WHITE'S *Natural History of Selborne* is apposite: 'The starlings also congregate in autumn. We saw a flight of these birds in the autumn of 1814, in King's County, Ireland, which literally darkened the air, and must have consisted of at least a hundred thousand; they were flying near the immense marshy plain near Banacher, through which the Shannon flows.' 'In the autumnal and hyemal months,' says Selby, 'these birds gather in immense flocks, and are particularly abundant in the fenny parts of Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, where they roost among the reeds.' Benvenuto da Imola comments thus, 'Starlings are lustful as birds naturally are; starlings are light, and so are lovers; starlings cross over to warm parts whither the heat of lechery calls them, and flee cold regions where there are no pretty women,' etc.

## CHAPTER XLV

### THE CRANE

IN the second circle of Hell Dante's ears were smitten by the wails, the shrieks and curses of the damned, who soon appeared to him through the darkness, driven on by the blast like a flock of starlings, and (writes Dante)

As cranes that fly, and, singing still their lay,  
Stretch out their lengthened line against the sky,  
Thus did I see this shadowy array,  
Borne onward ever with a mournful cry.

— MRS. RAMSAY.

*E come i gru van cantando lor lai,  
Facendo in aer di sè lunga riga ;  
Così vid' io venir, traendo guai,  
Ombre portate dalla detta briga.<sup>1</sup>*

Not only does Dante portray the cranes as flying in a long line — in Indian file — rather than in a wedge, but they go singing their 'lay.' How strange a conception of the chattering pipe of the crane! Yet such an attribution to birds of a human poetic formula may be conventional, and is certainly not new; for the Provençal poet, Deude de Pradas, tells how the nightingale blithely sings his 'lays' beneath green leaves in spring: —

*El temps qu'el rossinhol s'esjau  
E fai sos lais sutz lo vert fuelh.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* V, 46-49.

<sup>2</sup> RAYNOUARD, *Lexique*, s.v. 'lai.'

And Dante himself makes the swallow sing her 'sad lays.'

The idea is probably conventional, and certainly very old; for Arbois de Jubainville quotes an Irish poem of the eighth or ninth century in which birds are described as singing two kinds of poetry, — one the *trîrech*, the other the *lay*: —

*Do-m farcai fídbaidæ fal*  
*Fo-m chain lôid luin lûad, nad cêl*  
*Huas mo lebrân indlînech*  
*Fo-m chain trîrech inna ên.<sup>1</sup>*

'A wood-hedge surrounds me; for me is sung the *lôid* of the swift blackbird, truly; on my little interlineated book for me is sung the *trîrech* of the birds.'

That Dante's cranes sing a *woful* lay is obvious from the various sounds made by the damned.<sup>2</sup> The flight of our poet's cranes is even more curious than their song; for in Paradise he sees the flamelike angels flitting about in such a way as to make now *D*, now *I*, now *L*, and, though the poet compares these angels to 'birds,' he got his ideas from a tradition of the cranes. This tradition is old enough to appear vaguely in Lucan,<sup>3</sup> then clearly

<sup>1</sup> See *Romania*, 1879, p. 422.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* V, 34-36: —

'Quando giungon davanti alla ruina,  
 Quivi le strida, il compianto e il lamento,  
 Bestemmian quivi la virtù divina.'

<sup>3</sup> *Phars.* V, 711-713: —

'Strymona sic gelidum bruma pellente relinquunt  
 Poturæ te, Nile, grues primoque volatu  
 Effingunt varias casu monstrante figuras.'

'Thus, when the frost drives, the cranes leave icy Strymon to drink

in Martial,<sup>1</sup> and St. Jerome,<sup>2</sup> who handed it down to the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> Dante says:—

*Io vidi, in quella giovial facella  
Lo sfavillar dell' amor che lì era,  
Segnare agli occhi miei nostra favella.<sup>4</sup>  
E come augelli<sup>5</sup> surti di riviera,*

thee, Nile, and, in their first flight, they make various figures, as chance designs.'

<sup>1</sup> *Epig.* XIII, 75:—

'Turbabis versum, nec littera tota volabit  
Unam perdideris si Palamedis avem.'

'You will mar the verse, nor will the whole letter fly if you lose one bird of Palamedes.'

<sup>2</sup> Cited by Vincenzo Tanaro. See note 3. VINCENZO TANARO, *La Caccia degli Uccelli, Scelta di Curios. Lett.*, vol. 217, p. 14, 'Palamede dal volar delle grue compose le lettere dalle quali ne venne la Grammatica, onde S. Girolamo disse: Grues viam ordine literato.' Neckam (Wright's ed., p. 97 ff.), 'Grues in volatu literam in aere depingere videntur, unde et ab ipsis congrui exortum esse dicitur. Unde Martialis,' etc. 'Gruem autem dicit avem Palamedis quia ipse figuras in Græco idiomate adinvenit et grammaticam in multis adauxit.'

<sup>3</sup> In the book *De Bestiis*, attributed to Hugo of St. Victor (lib. I, cap. XXXIX), occurs a thoroughly mystic interpretation, 'De gruibus ordine litterato unam prævalentem sequentibus. Grues dum pergunt, unam sequuntur ordine litterato. . . . Illos autem significant, qui ad hoc student, ut ordinate vivant. Grues enim ordine litterato volantes designant ordinate viventes. Cum autem ordinate volando procedunt, ex se litteras in volatu fingunt. Illos autem designant, qui in se præcepta scripturæ bene vivendo formant.'—Dante's 'Diligite Justitiam.'

<sup>4</sup> Dante's mind seems to have worked in this way: Knowing the legend of the letter-making cranes, he devised the action of the flame-like, flitting angels. Then, with the cranes still in his thoughts, he followed up his description with the simile of the birds rising from a river bank.

<sup>5</sup> 'Augelli' is well used instead of 'gru,' which would be too specific.



*Quasi congratulando a lor pasture  
Fanno di sè or tonda or altra schiera,<sup>1</sup>  
Sì dentro ai lumi sante creature  
Volitando cantavano, e faciensi  
Or D, or I, or L, in sue figure.<sup>2</sup>*

‘I saw, within that torch of Jove, the sparkling of the love which was there shape out our speech to my eyes. And as birds, risen from the river bank, as if rejoicing together over their food, make of themselves a troop now round, now of some other shape, so within the lights holy creatures were singing as they flew, and made themselves now *D*, now *I*, now *L*, in their proper shapes.’ — NORTON.

This angelic manner of whiling away eternity was, as has been shown, not an invention of Dante’s; but there is a pretty touch of truth in the birds’ flight.

Dante again refers to the flight of cranes when he sees a band of rueful souls in Purgatory move swiftly away: —

*Come gli augei<sup>3</sup> che vernan lungo il Nilo  
Alcuna volta in aer fanno schiera,  
Poi volan più in fretta e vanno in filo;*

<sup>1</sup> FREDERICK II (*De A. V. cum Avibus*, I, 10) makes this keen observation of birds going to and fro from their feeding place (Dante’s ‘pasture’): ‘Their way of going away and coming back is manifold; for some gather with others of the same kind and go away in many scattered flocks; then come back, some following the others successively, as it were, in a double order of lines, falling then into an angular form. Rarely, however, do they join the number of another kind, but remain mostly geese with geese, ducks with ducks, teal with teal (*circellæ cum circellis*), cranes with cranes, and so forth as to the rest.’

<sup>2</sup> *Parad.* XVIII, 70–78. D I L are the first letters of DILIGITE IUSTITIAM (vs. 91).

<sup>3</sup> *Augei* = *gru*.

*Così tutta la gente che lì era,  
Volgendo il viso, raffretò suo passo,  
E per magrezza e per voler leggiera.<sup>1</sup>*

‘Even as the birds that winter along the Nile, now in the air form a squadron, then fly in greater haste and go in file, thus all the people there, turning their faces, hurried on, light both through leanness and through will.’

Though the flight of these birds is here described so accurately as to seem like an observation of nature, the description shows its slightly bookish origin in the words: *che vernan lungo il Nilo* (that winter along the Nile). Why should Dante have supposed that the cranes (which he could see so often in Italy<sup>2</sup>) wintered along the Nile? Obviously because the Nile is given as their winter quarters by Aristotle,<sup>3</sup> Lucan,<sup>4</sup> Albert of Bollstädt,<sup>5</sup> Neckam,<sup>6</sup> and various other medieval authorities.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XXIV, 64–69.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. note 1, page 286, and *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus*, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> *De Hist. Animal.* lib. VIII, cap. 12, ‘Just as some men stay within doors in winter and others, lords of a greater domain, change their seat for a time in order to pass the summer in cool places, the winter in warm; so do the lower animals that can move from place to place. Some find relief in their own haunts; others go abroad. With the autumnal equinox from the Pontus and cold regions they flee the coming winter. In summer, however, they go from warm to cool lands for fear of the coming heat. And some start from neighbouring places; others from very far away. I almost had said as do the cranes, which from the Scythian fields come to the upper marshes in Egypt, whence flows the Nile, in which place they are said to fight with the pygmies.’

<sup>4</sup> *Phars.* III, 199–200.

<sup>5</sup> *De Animal.* lib. VII, tract. i, cap. 6, ‘Grues autem præcipue faciunt hoc in quibusdam terris, sicut in Græcia; volant enim a Græcia versus meridiem ultra Ægyptum, ubi fluit Nilus,’ etc.

<sup>6</sup> Wright’s ed., p. 97 ff.

The symbolical movement of the sodomites to the left and of the lechers to the right in the cleansing process of Purgatory, led our poet into one of the few unhappy figures in the *Divina Commedia*,—unhappy because summer and winter must be conceived to coincide; or because an hypothesis renders a simple natural truth so ambiguous as to mar irrevocably what might have been art. Here is the poet's unhumorous, if not grotesque, description of these once erring souls:—

*Tosto che parton l' accoglienza amica,  
Prima che il primo passo li trascorra,  
Sopragridar ciascuna s' affatica;  
La nuova gente: 'Soddoma e Gomorra;'  
E l' altra: 'Nella vacca entra Pasife,  
Perchè il torello a sua lussuria corra.'  
Poi come gru, ch' alle montagne Rife<sup>1</sup>  
Volasser parte, e parte inver l' arene,<sup>2</sup>  
Queste del giel, quelle del sole schife,  
L' una gente sen va e l' altra sen viene.<sup>3</sup>*

No sooner is the friendly greeting ended,  
Or ever the first footstep passes onward,  
Each one endeavours to outcry the other;  
The new-come people: 'Sodom and Gomorrah!'  
The rest: 'Into the cow Pasiphaë enters  
So that the bull unto her lust may run!'  
Then as the cranes, that to the Riphæan mountains  
Might fly in part and part towards the sand,

<sup>1</sup> *BENVENUTO DA IMOLA*, 'That is to say, northward; for the Riphæan mountains are in the region of aquilo under our pole.' The Ottimo says these mountains are in Scythia or at the end of Germany.

<sup>2</sup> Africa; cf. *Inf.* XXIV, 85, 'Più non si vanti Libia con sua rena.'

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* XXVI, 37-46.

These of the frost, those of the sun avoidant,  
One folk is going and the other coming.

— LONGFELLOW.

There is no way out of the difficulty; for the mere supposition that cranes might fly both north and south destroys the illusion; nor is the blemish to be removed by the commentators' laborious apologies.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Scartazzini on *Purg.* XXVI, 44.

## CHAPTER XLVI

### THE STORK

IF a man be held fast in ice up to the neck, and cannot die, — death being an impossibility in Hell, — what is above the ice must shiver not only for itself, but for all that is below. This is the plight of cold-blooded traitors.

Their teeth, then, are bound to chatter extraordinarily, more than if they were clattering with a mere earthly or transient chill. How shall such a sound be rendered to those who have not yet been in Hell? By a touch from living nature. Such is the never failing method of Dante, who thus describes this chattering: —

Livid, as far down as where shame appears,  
Were the disconsolate shapes within the ice,  
Setting their teeth unto the note of storks.

— LONGFELLOW.

*Livide insin là dove appar vergogna,  
Eran l' ombre dolenti nella ghiaccia;  
Mettendo i denti in nota di cicogna.*<sup>1</sup>

One may easily believe that Dante had often heard live storks clapping their beaks on some Italian house-top, for storks were a familiar sight in Dante's time.<sup>2</sup> Brunetto Latini observes that the stork is a bird without

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXXII, 34-36.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De Animal.* lib. XXIII, tract. unicus. *Tresor*, pp. 211-212.



a tongue, 'wherefore they say he does not sing, but claps his beak and makes a great noise.'<sup>1</sup>

Whoever has seen a pair of storks over their nest will have remarked the benignant and almost patriarchal air with which they gaze down upon their young. Long before Dante, the amiability of the stork and the creature's tenderness for its little ones had been noted piously.<sup>2</sup> No wonder, then, that our poet chose the stork rather than some other bird to figure a motherly tenderness, shown to him by the mystic Eagle. Already the falcon has been made to picture the Eagle's expression of eagerness and its self-embellishment;<sup>3</sup> but now an amiable mother or father stork is exploited in order to describe another emotion of the mystic Eagle. To compare the action of this composite eagle to the manners of a stork gives rise to an incongruity greater than that of the two saints whom our author compares to wheeling, murmuring doves.<sup>4</sup> Yet Paradise is an utterly

<sup>1</sup> *Tresor*, *ibid.* Cf. also Ovid's line (*Met.* VI, 97), 'Ipsa plaudet crepitante ciconia rostro,' and the line by Juvenal (*Sat.* I, 116), 'Quæque salutato crepitat Concordia nido.' But more interesting by far is a statement by Hugo of St. Victor, which bears directly on the scene in Dante. 'The storks,' writes Hugo, 'for voice make a sound with clacking beaks. The storks signify those who with weeping and gnashing of teeth utter with their mouths what they have done ill.' (Ciconiæ sonum oris pro voce quatiante rostro faciunt. Illos autem prætendunt qui cum fletu et stridore dentium quod male gesserunt ore promunt.) *De Bestiis*, I, 42.

<sup>2</sup> ST. AMBROSE, *Hexameron*, V, 16. SOLINUS, *Polyhist.* XL, 25. HUGO OF ST. VICTOR (who copies Isidor of Seville, XII, vii, 16), 'Eximia illis circa filios pietas,' etc. *De Bestiis*, I, 42.

<sup>3</sup> *Parad.* XIX, 34-39. See p. 248.

<sup>4</sup> Peter and James, compared to amorous doves in *Parad.* XXV, 19-24.

impossible conception save when expressed with the imagery of this world, and almost any figure applied to shapes of light or mere abstractions must lose the value of similitude, keeping simply the quality of a more or less accurate description of actual life as we know it in this world. Nevertheless, it is such touches that keep Dante's Paradise from falling to the level of mere rimed theology.

In this way he expresses the benignity of the imperial composite Eagle:—

*Quale sopr' esso il nido si rigira,  
Poi che ha pasciuto la cicogna i figli,  
E come quei ch' è pasto la rimira;  
Cotal si fece, e sì levai li cigli,  
La benedetta immagine che l' ali  
Movea, sospinta da tanti consigli.<sup>1</sup>*

Even as above her nest goes circling round  
The stork when she has fed her little ones,  
And he who has been fed looks up at her,  
So lifted I my brow, and even such  
Became the blessed image, which its wings  
Was moving, by so many counsels urged.

— LONGFELLOW.

Stork nature is here observed correctly in every detail; and, though popular tradition may have led Dante to choose for this image the stork rather than other birds whose action is similar, the poet is nevertheless using an observation of his own, and not an image from some other poet's store, or from the bestiaries.

Once more the stork appears, and in a most winsome

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* XIX, 91-96.

image; for, though the action described be true of perhaps any bird that is learning to fly, it is also true of the little stork, and one distinctly feels in this instance the larger capacity of man, the capacity to sympathise with less favoured members of the animal kingdom. To denote his own faltering mood, Dante compares himself to the little stork:—

*E quale il cicognin che leva l' ala  
Per voglia di volar, e non s' attenda  
D' abbandonar lo nido, e giù la cala ;  
Tal era io con voglia accesa e spenta  
Di domandar, venendo infin all' atto  
Che fa colui ch' a dicer s' argomenta.<sup>1</sup>*

And as the little stork that lifts its wing  
With a desire to fly and does not venture  
To leave the nest, and lets it downward droop,  
Even such was I, with the desire of asking  
Kindled and quenched, unto the motion coming  
He makes who doth address himself to speak.

— LONGFELLOW.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XXV, 10-15.



From a medieval design. After Cahier

## CHAPTER XLVII

### THE PELICAN

*Pie Pelicane, Jesu Domine,  
Me immundum munda tuo sanguine  
Cuius una stilla saluum facere  
Totum quit ab omni mundum scelere !<sup>1</sup>*

THUS in a hymn St. Thomas Aquinas not only embodies a fable once believed by all, but offers an example of a fashion common in the devout literature of the

<sup>1</sup> Cited by HIPPEAU, *Bestiaire d'Amour*, p. 128. Translation, 'Pious Pelican, Lord Jesus, unclean as I am, cleanse me with thy blood, one drop of which can redeem me and wash away every sin.'

Middle Ages. What, then, is the nature of this fable? The pelican, in order to regurgitate the food which it brings to its young, presses its beak against the food-carrying pouch, and the pouch against its breast. Thus the food is squeezed up and out for the clamouring little pelicans, which, in their hunger, might easily seem to a careless observer to be using their great clumsy beaks against the parent bird. On the basis of this natural occurrence arose a legend believed everywhere and by probably all for fully fifteen hundred years.<sup>1</sup> Alexander Neckam's version will serve as a type containing all that is essential to understand the lines in Dante.

'Now the nature and the customs of that bird,' says Neckam, 'are wont to be referred to Christ Himself. This bird slays its young, and the transgression of the command given by our Lord to our first parents caused them to incur death. Verily all the posterity of Adam were slain; for they were given over to punishment and to death. Three days the pelican mourns for its young, and for three days of His passion, in a certain way, the Lord mourned for His own. This bird opened its side and sprinkled its young with blood. So, too, from the opened side of our Lord flowed out the sacrament of our redemption.'

*Vita æterna, Deus, mortem gustavit ad horam,  
Ut miser æternum vivere possit homo.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In almost every version of the *Physiologus* both in Latin and in the vulgar tongues, by Brunetto Latini, p. 217 ff., by St. Epiphanius, Isidor of Seville, Vincent of Beauvais, Hugo of St. Victor, and a thousand others, clerics and laymen, poets and encyclopedists.

<sup>2</sup> Wright's ed., pp. 118-119.



Beatrice says of St. John the Evangelist : —

*Questi è colui che giacque sopra il petto  
Del nostro Pellicano, e questi fue  
D' in sulla croce al grande officio eletto.*<sup>1</sup>

This is the one who lay upon the breast  
Of Him our Pelican ; and this is he  
To the great office from the cross elected.

— LONGFELLOW.

Is Dante following tradition when he takes the Pelican as a symbol of Jesus Christ? The answer may be given by Didron.<sup>2</sup> 'Christ,' writes Didron, 'is symbolised by the lion, better still by the lamb ; but He is only figured by the pelican. The pelican opening his heart to feed his young with his blood is the figure of Jesus who shed in death all the blood in His veins to redeem men. But never does the pelican bear a nimbus, much less a cruciferous nimbus. Never in the court of heaven does the pelican represent Jesus Christ, nor attend in that quality on the events which there come to pass.'

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* XXV, 112-114.

<sup>2</sup> *Iconographie Chrétienne*, p. 350. The fabulous pelican may be seen in hundreds of medieval illuminations and was often carved on churches. A lectern composed chiefly of a pelican rending its breast may be seen in a church at Haarlem and in that of Ste. Anne at Douai.

## CHAPTER XLVIII

### THE SWAN

IN an eclogue addressed to the pedant Giovanni del Virgilio, Dante models his style after Virgil, but he introduces an allusion obviously borrowed from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Necessarily our poet's thoughts were forced into the channels suggested by the vocabulary and literary traditions of the old Latin tongue. If, then, Dante introduces a touch of animal life, there is no occasion for seeking an observation of his own, but we should expect only what we get, — the faint, far echo of a few verses read in Ovid, and as barren of originality or life in Ovid's lines as in those of Dante.

Alphesibœus, a mouth-piece borrowed from Virgil (*Ecl.* V, 73; VIII, 1), expresses his wonder that Mopsus likes a certain spot, though he can quite understand 'why the snowy birds, joyful in the mildness of heaven and in the marshy valley, like to make Cayster resound.'

*Quod libeat niveis avibus resonare Caystrum  
Temperie cœli lætis, et valle palustri.*

—Oxford Dante, p. 189, vss. 18–19.

Obviously the idea is based on these verses (with a change of application due to some allegory no longer clear):—

*Æstuat Alpheus, ripæ Spercheïdes ardent,  
Quodque suo Tagus amne vehit, fluit ignibus aurum;*

*Et quæ Mæonia celebrabant carmine ripas  
Flumineæ volucres, medio caluere Caystro.*<sup>1</sup>

— *Met.* II, 250–253.

And on these:—

*Haud procul Hennæis lacus est a mænibus altæ,  
Nomine Pergus, aquæ. Non illo plura Caystros  
Carmina cycnorum labentibus audit in undis.*<sup>2</sup>

— *Met.* V, 385–387.

The swans are snowy white; so they are in Valerius Flaccus (6, 102) *olores nivei*; and Silviu (13, 116) says:—

*Quæ candore nivem, candore anteirit olores.*

‘She who in whiteness surpasses the snow, in whiteness would surpass the swans.’

No epithet was ever more obvious or oftener used than ‘snow-white’ of the swan. ‘The swan,’ declares Isidor of Seville, ‘is so called because his feathers are all white, for no one remembers a black swan,’<sup>3</sup>—and Brunetto Latini<sup>4</sup> copies him. Of the old poets, Horace

<sup>1</sup> ‘The Alpheus seethes, the banks of Spercheos glow, and the gold that the Tagus bears in its torrent rolls in flames; and the river birds that had been wont to throng singing on the Mæonian banks were scorched in mid Cayster.’

<sup>2</sup> ‘Not far from Henna’s walls is a deep lake, called Pergus. More songs of swans the Caystros never hears on its gliding waves.’

<sup>3</sup> *Etymol.* XII, vii, 18, ‘Olor autem dictus, quod sit totus plumis albis; nullus enim meminit cygnum nigrum.’

<sup>4</sup> *Tresor*, p. 213. Brunetto mentions also the beauty of its death song, a myth accepted by Horace (*Od.* IV, 2, 25), Ovid (*Heroid.* VII, 1–2), and by the ‘Physiologus,’ but doubted by Pliny (‘Olorum morte narratur flebilis cantus, falso ut arbitror, aliquot experimentis.’ *Nat. Hist.* 10, 32).

only *seems* to apply another hue.<sup>1</sup> He speaks of gleaming swans. 'What,' cries Alexander Neckam, 'what shall we say of the swan, which seems to be clad in its tender age in a dusky hue, but ere long changes to a dazzling whiteness? Even thus some seem first to be darkened by a cloud of sin, and afterward are clad in the spiritual raiment of the dazzling whiteness of innocence.'<sup>2</sup>

Dante remembers the swan on wishing to describe the wings of an angel:—

*Con l' ali aperte che parean di cigno.*<sup>3</sup>

With opened wings that seemed those of a swan.

Dante must have been thinking of a white swan, and therefore of a white-winged angel. Swans were always white till travellers in South America came upon a black-necked kind, and further upset Noah's zoölogy by finding in Australia a swan wholly black. Swans are now exclusively white only in literature.

<sup>1</sup> *Od.* IV, 1, 10:—

'Tempestivius in domum  
Pauli, purpureis ales oloribus,  
Comissabere Maximi  
Si torrere iecur quæris idoneum.'

'In fitter season, if thou wouldst set a ready heart on fire shalt thou enter revelling the house of Paulus Maximus, borne on wings of gleaming swans.' Servius explains this *purpureis* to mean simply 'beautiful,' 'purpureum, pulchrum ut Horatius: purpureis ales oloribus.' Cited by L. MÜLLER, *Horatius*, p. 344.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. by Wright, p. 101.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* XIX, 46. See chapter on 'The Angels,' p. 28.

## CHAPTER XLIX

### THE BLACKBIRD

THOUGH Dante, in a didactic mood, twice<sup>1</sup> denies that any bird can speak, he has adopted a pretty legend, current, no doubt, before his time. A commentator so early as Benvenuto da Imola catches the point of Dante's allusion, and a story in the background is told by the Florentine Francesco Sacchetti,<sup>2</sup> who relates that 'a blackbird had found shelter in a house during the winter. When a fine day came at the end of January (such days are known in Lombardy as *giorni di merla*) he began to rejoice, and flew away from his master singing, "Sir, I care for thee no more, for I am out of the winter"; but soon he repented, because the cold set in again, and so he knew that the spell of fair weather was not spring.'<sup>3</sup>

Sapia, a lady of Siena, refers to the insolent blackbird in a charmingly natural way. Not long after Sapia's prayer to God to do His will, her enemies were put to flight by her fellow-citizens near Colle; and this lady gloated beyond measure at the chase.

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* III, vii, 104-107, and *De V. E.* I, ii, 52-56.

<sup>2</sup> A.D. 1330-1399.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from VERNON, *Readings, Purg.* I, pp. 339. Sacchetti in nov. 149 (Fraticelli's 'Antica Novella') uses the words, 'Domine, più non ti curo, chè uscito son dal verno.' For a long article on Dante's blackbird, see LUISI, in *Giornale Dantesco*, VIII, 109.



*Rotti fur quivi, e volti negli amari  
 Passi di fuga, e veggendo la caccia,  
 Letizia presi a tutte altre dispari;  
 Tanto ch' io volsi in su l' ardità faccia,  
 Gridando a Dio: 'Omai più non ti temo';  
 Come fa il merlo per poca bonaccia.<sup>1</sup>*

Routed were they, and turned into the bitter  
 Passes of flight; and I, the chase beholding,  
 A joy received unequalled by all others;  
 So that I lifted upward my bold face,  
 Crying to God: 'Henceforth I fear thee not,'  
 As did <sup>2</sup> the blackbird at the little sunshine.

— LONGFELLOW.

Though the male blackbird has a few sweet, mellow notes, his colour and his habit of living alone gave him, no doubt, this half-devilish reputation. In the legend adopted by Dante he seems to have defied God; to St. Benedict he incarnated the demon.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XIII, 118-123.

<sup>2</sup> Some MSS. read *fe'*. Whether we choose *fe'* or *fa* the allusion is equally proverbial.

<sup>3</sup> In the dialogues of St. Gregory is told this story: 'St. Benedict, happening one day to be alone, saw come to him a little blackbird vulgarly called merle, which began to flutter about him, striking him in the face with its wings. The saint might easily have laid hold of the bird, but drove it off with the sign of the cross. For days afterward he was a prey to such violent emotions that he could undo their effect only by casting himself quite naked upon the nettles and briars that he found about his cell,' etc. Cf. HIPPEAU, *Bestiaire d'Amour*, p. 120. The blackbird of St. Benedict was, of course, the fiend.

## CHAPTER L

### THE MAGPIE

IN the work *De Vulgari Eloquentia*,<sup>1</sup> Dante names Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as the place where speaking magpies are mentioned. It is, therefore, safe to assume that he refers to the Ovidian version<sup>2</sup> of the legend in the invocation of Purgatory.

*Ma qui la morta poesi risurga,  
O sante Muse, poichè vostro sono,  
E qui Calliope alquanto surga,  
Seguitando il mio canto con quel suono,  
Di cui le Piche misere sentiro  
Lo colpo tal che disperar perdono.*<sup>3</sup>

But let dead Poesy here rise again,  
O holy Muses, since that I am yours,  
And here Calliope somewhat ascend,  
My song accompanying with that sound  
Of which the miserable magpies felt  
The blow so great that they despaired of pardon.  
— LONGFELLOW.

Without Ovid's description Dante's reference is entirely incomprehensible.<sup>4</sup> Now the nine daughters of

<sup>1</sup> *De V. E.* I, ii, 52-66.

<sup>2</sup> *Met.* V, 294 ff.; also 662-678.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* I, 7-12.

<sup>4</sup> Scartazzini's note on *Purg.* I, 11, is one evidence only of the adulation to which many admirers of Dante have come. Dante's verses on the 'Piche' demand acquaintance with the mythological episode, which alone gives them any meaning.

Pierius, king of Thessaly, challenged the Muses to a trial of skill at song. Being vanquished, all nine were changed into magpies, whose fate and sorrows Ovid describes in his *Metamorphoses*. It is to these mythological magpies that Dante alludes in the treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, where he wishes to show that Ovid is speaking figuratively when he describes talking magpies.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. note 1. Cf. also *Conv.* III, vii, 107, where Dante also refers to the parrot.

## CHAPTER LI

### THE ROOK OR DAW — LA POLA

THE author of the oldest Provençal poem at present known,<sup>1</sup> having possibly mistaken an uncial *Q* in his manuscript of Boethius for an uncial *A*, read *avibus* instead of *quibus*, and then proceeded to describe how Boethius beheld a hundred thousand birds mounting a ladder toward heaven. Some (the souls of those who had sinned too deeply) had to come down again; but the virtuous, having risen to Θ, the mystic letter at the top of the ladder beheld by Boethius on the gown of Damosel Philosophy, are redeemed, and, changing hue, become beloved of the Damosel.<sup>2</sup> Though it may be that Dante neither made the same error, nor yet knew any version of the Provençal poem, it nevertheless is true that in the Seventh Heaven the poet, accompanied by Beatrice (the embodiment of Theology), beheld a heavenly ladder on which angels were descending. No

<sup>1</sup> Text in PAUL MEYER's *Recueil*, pp. 23-32. *Choix*. II, pp. 4-39.

<sup>2</sup> The misread sentence in Boethius is this: *Atque inter utrasque litteras in scalarum modum gradus quidam insigniti videbantur, quibus ab inferiore ad superius elementum esset adscensus*. 'And between the two letters [seen on the gown of Philosophy] some steps like those of ladders were clearly seen, whereon the ascent was made from the lower to the higher element.' For this explanation of the birds in the Provençal Boethius, see article by HOFMANN, *Quellen des ältesten provenzalischen Gedichtes*, in the *Sitzungsberichte* of the Munich Acad. of Sciences, 1870, pp. 176-177.

doubt this is Jacob's ladder;<sup>1</sup> yet in the background of the poet's memory there may have been another idea—a reminiscence, perhaps, of the Provençal Boethius, or of some similar poem.

Though to Dante's mind those who descended the ladder were beaming angels, they suggest to him an image of the flight of rooks at dawn.

*Di color d' oro, in che raggio traluçe,  
Vid' io uno scaleo eretto in suso  
Tanto, che nol seguiva la mia luce.  
Vidi anco per li gradi scender giuso  
Tanti splendor, ch' io pensai ch' ogni lume  
Che par nel ciel quindi fosse diffuso.  
E come, per lo natural costume,  
Le pole<sup>2</sup> insieme, al cominciar del giorno,  
Si movono a scaldar le fredde piume;*

<sup>1</sup> See Genesis xxviii, 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Pole*, now obsolete in Tuscan save in a proverb, is used by the Venetians (so G. di Mirafiore says) to designate a *taccola* or daw. Benvenuto da Imola renders, 'the magpie or something similar,' 'le pole, quæ sunt de genere picarum.' Lubin, Fraticelli, and Scartazzini say '*cornacchie*'; Giuseppe Campi says '*cornacchia*,' '*mulacchia*'; Andreoli, 'dette anche *mulacchie* e più comunemente *cornacchie*.' Philalethes translates 'Krähn.' In my opinion the word *pola* is derived from *cornix paula*, as *sanglier*, by the same well-known dropping of the noun, is derived from *porcus singularis*. *Cornix paula* = *cornicula* or, rather \**cornacula*, whence *cornacchia*. No etymology for *pola* is registered in KÖRTING, *Lateinisch-Romanisches Wörterbuch*, 2d ed. As to the meaning of *pola*, the following definitions are given: *cornacchia*, *mulacchia*, *taccola*, and, finally, in his *Opere Div.* 90, Franc. Sacchetti attributes to the *pola* essentially the characteristics attributed by the 'Physiologus' to the *upupa*, hoopoe or lapwing. The weight of testimony indicates that the bird is either the rook or the daw. The word *pola* seems to have had more than one owner in Dante's time.



*Poi altre vanno via senza ritorno,  
 Altre rivolgon sè, onde son mosse,  
 Ed altre roteando fan soggiorno;  
 Tal modo parve a me che quivi fosse  
 In quello sfavillar che insieme venne,  
 Sì come in certo grado si percosse.<sup>1</sup>*

Coloured like gold on which the sunshine gleams,  
 A stairway I beheld to such a height  
 Uplifted that mine eye pursued it not.  
 Likewise beheld I down the steps descending  
 So many splendours that I thought each light  
 That in the heaven appears was there diffused.  
 And as accordant with their natural custom  
 The rooks together at the break of day  
 Bestir themselves to warm their feathers cold;  
 Then some of them fly off without return,  
 Others come back to where they started from,  
 And others wheeling round still keep at home,  
 Such fashion it appeared to me was there  
 Within the sparkling that together came  
 As soon as on a certain step it struck.

— LONGFELLOW.

Hard though it be for the unrelated sceptic of these days even for a moment to force into the mind's eye any vision of these variously moving angelic 'splendours,' the image from nature has all the undiminished beauty of truth. Rooks and daws are not, however, the only birds that shake the chilly wetness out of their feathers at dawn. In the second song of Helgi, Sigrun utters her joy over her well-beloved husband by comparing it to the joy felt by Odin's hawks, when, at early

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* XXI, 28-42.

dawn, they sit in the wood, dripping with dew. ‘Nu,’ she cries, ‘em ek svâ fegin sem atfrekir Oðin’s haukar, er döglitir dagsbrûn sîa!’ (Now I am as happy as Odin’s greedy hawks, when, dripping with dew, they see the brow of day.)<sup>1</sup>

So, in a passage read by Dante,<sup>2</sup> Virgil tells how the rook, soaked by showers, calls out harshly, and hovers about alone over the dry sand. And Selby describes how starlings, ‘before they retire to rest, . . . perform various manœuvres in the air, the whole frequently describing rapid revolutions around a common centre. This peculiar flight will sometimes continue for nearly an hour before they become finally settled for the night. Upon the approach of spring they spread themselves over the whole country.’<sup>3</sup>

There is a certain likeness between Dante’s phrase and Virgil’s, but a likeness forced by nature; for if two men observe nature understandingly in any single phenomenon, the result of their observation is destined to be similar in tone, if not in the mere accident of words. If there be one simile in Dante for which he owes no debt, it is this lively description of the chilly rooks shaking themselves to get some warming blood into their wings, then wheeling and flying away, or settling down in the same spot, as they happen to be inclined, — a di-

<sup>1</sup> Cited by LÜNING, *Die Natur in der altgermanischen und mittelhochdeutschen Epik*, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. EDW. MOORE, *Studies in Dante*, First Series, p. 344.

‘Tum cornix plena pluvium vocat improba voce,

Et sola in sicca secum spatiat harena.’ *Georg.* I, 388–389.

<sup>3</sup> In WHITE’S *Nat. Hist. of Selborne*, note by editor to letter XLVIII.

versity of purpose and of actions entirely at variance with our author's dogma that all animals of the same species act in a uniform manner.<sup>1</sup> No, it is hardly the dogmatist that is speaking here, but rather the poet who rebuked those sterile rimesters, Bonagiunta of Lucca, the Notary, and Guittone of Arezzo, in these majestic verses : —

One am I, who, whenever  
Love doth inspire me, note, and in that measure  
Which he within me dictates, singing go.<sup>2</sup>

It is from nature alone that we can get new images, new truths. All else seems mere cobwebs and dust. To think of Dante in some cold, wet grove or wood at dawn, watching keenly every movement of these birds as they bestir themselves for the business of another day, certainly starts a new train of speculation.

<sup>1</sup> See *De V. E.* I, ii, 36-37.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* XXIV, 52-54.

## CHAPTER LII

### THE PHENIX

DANTE saw this miracle in Hell. A thief, having been bitten by a demoniacal serpent, burnt to ashes quicker than you could write O or I. Then, like the phenix, he came to life again in his old form.

*Nè O si tosto mai, nè I si scrisse,  
Com' ei s' accese ed arse, e cener tutto  
Convenne che cascando divenisse :  
E poi che fu a terra sì distrutto,  
La polver si raccolse per sè stessa,  
E in quel medesmo ritornò di butto :  
Così per li gran savi si confessa<sup>1</sup>  
Che la Fenice more e poi rinasce,  
Quando al cinquecentesimo anno appressa.  
Erba nè biado in sua vita non pasce,  
Ma sol d' incenso lagrime ed amomo ;<sup>2</sup>  
E nardo e mirra son l' ultime fasce.<sup>3</sup>*

Never was O nor I more swiftly penned  
Than, sinking down, all ashes he became !  
As soon as thus dissolved in dust he fell,  
Straightway the ashes gathered from the earth

<sup>1</sup> Cf. this verse with *Inf.* XXIX, 63, where Dante tells of the ants from whose seed arose the new people in Ægina : —

‘Secondo che i poeti hanno per fermo.’

<sup>2</sup> Literally (according to Toynbee's text), ‘but only tears of incense and amomum.’

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXIV, 100–111.

To their old figure : thus great sages tell  
 The phenix dies, then hath a second birth,  
 About the term of her five hundred years,  
 Through which on no green herb nor blade she feeds,  
 But incense only and the amomum's tears,  
 While myrrh and spikenard form her funeral weeds.

— PARSONS.

Though our poet says, '*Così per li gran savi si confessata*' (thus by the great sages is avowed), he borrows this tale without the shadow of a doubt from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.<sup>1</sup>

How did the phenix look? Albert of Bollstädt, Bishop of Ratisbon, knows to the minutest detail; yet he squints at the story like a heretic. Here are his views: 'That the bird Phenix dwells in Eastern Arabia

<sup>1</sup> Lib. XV, 392-402:—

'Una est, quæ reparet seque ipsa reseminet, ales:  
 Assyrii phœnica vocant. Non fruge neque herbis,  
 Sed turis lacrimis et suco vivit amomi.  
 Hæc ubi quinque suæ complevit sæcula vitæ,  
 Illicis in ramis tremulæve cacumine palmæ  
 Unguibus et puro nidum sibi construit ore.  
 Quo simul ac casias et nardi lenis aristas  
 Quassaque cum fulva substravit cinnama murra,  
 Se superimponit, finitque in odoribus ævum.  
 Inde ferunt, totidem qui vivere debeat annos,  
 Corpore de patrio parvum phœnica renasci,' etc.

That Dante borrowed the story from Ovid will be obvious to whoever reads the description of other '*gran savi*,' e.g. SOLINUS, *Polyh.* 33; PLINY, *Nat. Hist.* X, 2; ISIDOR OF SEVILLE, *Etymol.* XII, vii, 22; STATIUS, *Silv.* II, 4; BRUNETTO LATINI, *Tresor*, p. 214.

Ovid and Pliny seem to have done most to form medieval opinion as to this thaumaturgic pheasant-like bird. Pliny avers that he got his information from Manilius, a senator of vast learning. Pliny evidently believes the tale; so does Brunetto Latini. Dante, like Albertus Magnus, seems not to believe.



is written by those who look rather into mystic theology than into nature. They say, indeed, that this bird without a male or mingling of sexes is the only one of its kind and liveth 340 years alone. It is furthermore, as they say, of an eagle's size, with a head like a peacock, and tufted cheeks. About the neck it gleams with a golden splendour, has a long tail of a brilliant hue (*purpurei coloris*), dotted with certain rose-tinted feathers, as the peacock's tail is decked with certain eye-shaped orbs. And this variety is of wondrous beauty.'

Having described how the phenix burns up at Heliopolis, then rises from its own ashes quick and whole, the bishop thus concludes, 'As Plato saith, not by us are to be calumniated those things which are set down in the books of holy shrines.'<sup>1</sup>

There was, as Ovid says, but one phenix in the world. This is why Dante exclaims in his letter to the Italian cardinals, 'But, O Fathers, deem me not the phenix of the universe; for, what I am chattering about, all are murmuring or thinking or dreaming.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *De Animalibus*, lib. XXIII, tract. unicus. The version of Albertus Magnus is repeated almost word for word by Benvenuto da Imola.

<sup>2</sup> *Epist.* VIII, viii, 122-123: 'Sed, o Patres, ne me phœnicem æstimetis in orbe terrarum. Omnes enim, quæ garrio, murmurant aut cogitant, aut somniant.' Cf. first line of citation in note 1, p. 310.

## CHAPTER LIII

### THE SWALLOW

WHETHER or not the proverb, 'One swallow does not make a summer,' was first written down by Aristotle, it is in Aristotle<sup>1</sup> that Dante found it; for, to point an argument, Dante says in his *Convivio*,<sup>2</sup> '*Siccome dice il mio maestro Aristotile nel primo dell' Etica, "una rondine non fa primavera,"*' — 'as my master, Aristotle, says in the first book of the *Ethics*, "one swallow does not make spring."'

It is again from a Greek, and not a Latin source that Dante draws, in alluding to the hour when Philomela grieves. The Latin poets commonly changed Philomela into a swallow, and Procne into a nightingale, whereas the Greeks got the legend the other way.<sup>3</sup> Dante dreamt when dreams are almost divine:—

Near to the dawning and about the hour  
When first the little swallow 'gins her sad lays,  
Mayhap remembering afresh her ancient woes.

*Nell' ora che comincia i tristi lai  
La rondinella presso alla mattina  
Forse a memoria de' suoi primi guai.*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Ethics*, I, vii, 16 (1098 a. 18). See EDW. MOORE, *Studies in Dante*, First Series, p. 376.

<sup>2</sup> I, ix, 60-62.

<sup>3</sup> See Tozer's comment on *Purg.* IX, 15. In *Purg.* XVII, 19-20, Dante identifies Procne with the nightingale.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* IX, 13-15.

Thus the twittering swallow sings 'lays,' like the cranes;<sup>1</sup> yet here the swallow's feigned reminiscence of a human existence undoubtedly influenced Dante's conception of the swallow's song.

The poet strikes a truer note when he breaks out at his adversaries that it would be better for them to fly low, like a swallow, than, like a kite, to sweep in lofty circles over things most vile.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See chapter on 'The Crane,' pp. 283-284.

<sup>2</sup> *Conv.* IV, vi, 187-190, 'Meglio sarebbe a voi, come rondine volare basso, che come nibbio altissime rote fare sopra cose vilissime.' See chapter on 'The Kite,' p. 253.

## CHAPTER LIV

### THE GOOSE

AMONG the usurers in Hell (whom Dante recognised only by their family blazons, painted on certain pouches that hung from their necks) the poet saw a member of the Florentine Ubbriachi and saw his arms.

*Vidine un' altra come sangue rossa  
Mostrare un' oca bianca più che burro.*<sup>1</sup>

Another of them saw I, red as blood  
Display a goose more white than butter is.

— LONGFELLOW.

Jacopo della Lana, Buti, and Benvenuto da Imola all agree as to this coat of arms, but Benvenuto is obviously 'calling names' when he says, 'That goose, a greedy bird, drank the blood of many.' Dante hardly meant to symbolise.

To those who, without art or science but trusting to their inborn genius alone, break forth in an endeavour to sing loftily the loftiest things, our poet satirically recommends to refrain from such presumption, and if they are geese through their natural sluggishness let them not imitate the star-sweeping eagle!<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XVII, 62-63.

<sup>2</sup> *De V. E.* II, iv, 77-82, 'Et ideo confiteatur eorum stultitia, qui arte scientiaque immunes, de solo ingenio confidentes, ad summa summe canenda prorumpunt; a tanta præsuntuositate desistant, et si anseres naturali desidia sunt, nolint astripetam aquilam imitari.'

There is more vitality in Dante's allusion to the 'goose' that saved Rome; for here the goose is conceived to be an agent of God, acting miraculously. In his conviction of Rome's divine destiny Dante cries, 'Did not God take a hand when the Frenchmen, having captured all Rome, were stealing upon the Capitol by night, and only the voice of a goose caused their coming to be known?'<sup>1</sup> Again, in the treatise *De Monarchia*, he refers to this occurrence, but the goose has assumed an angelic trait: it had never been seen there before!

'Livy,' declares Dante, 'and many illustrious writers bear harmonious testimony that when the Gauls, having taken the rest of the city and relying on the darkness, were stealthily climbing the Capitol, which alone remained to spare the Roman name from total destruction, a goose, never before seen there, cried that the Gauls were at hand, and awoke the guardians to the defence of the Capitol.'<sup>2</sup> Thus, then, our author not only makes the goose a worker of miracles, — quite like Balaam's ass and many saints, — but the goose is alone.

Cf. *Conv.* IV, vi, 187-190 (cited, p. 313, note 2). Cf. also VIRGIL, *Georg.* I, 119, — and, better still, *Ecl.* IX, 36, 'Argutos inter strepere anser olores.'

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* IV, v, 160-164, 'E non pose Iddio le mani proprie, quando li Franceschi, tutta Roma presa, prendeano di furto Campidoglio di notte, e solamente la voce d'un' oca fe' ciò sentire?'

<sup>2</sup> *De Mon.* II, iv, 42-49, 'Quumque Galli, reliqua urbe iam capta, noctis tenebris confisi, Capitolium furtim subirent, quod solum restabat ad ultimum interitum Romani nominis, anserem, ibi non ante visum, cecinisse Gallos adesse, atque custodes ad defensandum Capitolium excitasse, Livius et multi scriptores illustres concorditer contestantur.' See EDW. MOORE, *Studies*, First Series, p. 275 (2). Dante himself quotes Virgil's lines containing the *argenteus anser* (*De Mon.* II, iv, 56-57).



## CHAPTER LV

### THE COCK

*Lo gallo si è uno pollo, lo qual li omeni del mondo  
pò imprendere verasi esenpli.*<sup>1</sup> — *Tusco-Venetian Bestiary.*<sup>2</sup>

ALTHOUGH the cock never became so common a basis for moralisation as the lion, the viper, and many other animals, his reputation passed unscathed through the Middle Ages. On a shrine of St. Taurin of Evreux the cock figures as the emblem of a lady (Liberality) who is scattering coins from a golden vase.<sup>3</sup> St. Ambrose<sup>4</sup> has this to say: 'The crow of the cock is sweet at night and useful, too; for, like a good neighbour, he not only awakens the sleeper, but he warns the busy man, and comforts the wayfarer, crying out the passage of night with a cheerful meaning. At his voice the thief quits his wiles, and Dawn, awakened, lights up the heavens. At his voice the dreading sailor throws his sadness by, and oft the storm, driven up by the breath of evening, becomes mild. He urges to prayer, gives hope, lessens the pain of wounds, the burning of fever,

<sup>1</sup> Translation, 'The cock is a fowl that can teach the men of the world truthful examples.' This bestiary gives the cock an excellent reputation, pp. 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> Edited by Goldstaub and Wendriner. Halle, 1892.

<sup>3</sup> See CAHIER, *Mélanges*, II, 31.

<sup>4</sup> *Hexameron*, lib. V, cap. 88.

restores to Jesus the faith of backsliders,<sup>1</sup> sets the erring right again. The cock's crow warned Peter of his sin.'

Dante, meeting his beloved Nino in Purgatory, hears Nino chide his wife Beatrice for having married, on Nino's death, Galeazzo of Milan. Now this Galeazzo belonged to the Visconti, who bore in their arms a viper,<sup>2</sup> whereas Nino was of the Pisan Giudici (governors) of Gallura in Sardinia, and the Giudici bore in their arms a cock on a shield tierced in bend, azure, argent, and gules.<sup>3</sup> Thus to an emblem of heraldry Dante transfers the traditionally good reputation of the cock, which he obviously contrasts with the ill fame of the viper. Since it was an almost universal custom to carve the arms of great nobles on their tombs, the words that Dante makes him utter about his wife are clear :—

*Per lei assai di lieve si comprende,  
Quanto in femmina foco d' amor dura,  
Se l' occhio o il tatto spesso non l' accende.  
Non le farà sì bella sepoltura  
La vipera che i Milanesi accampa,  
Com' avria fatto il gallo di Gallura.<sup>4</sup>*

Through her full easily is comprehended  
How long in woman lasts the fire of love,  
If eye or touch do not relight it often.  
So fair a hatchment will not make for her  
The viper marshalling the Milanese  
Afield, as would have made Gallura's cock.

— LONGFELLOW.

<sup>1</sup> An obvious reminiscence of Matthew xxvi, 34.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter on 'Serpents,' pp. 332-333.

<sup>3</sup> See WOODWARD, *Heraldry, British and Foreign*, vol. I, p. 96.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* VIII, 76-81.

In these fictitious words of Nino Dante has blended a popular tradition with an heraldic emblem. Semblance of nature is still more remote when the poet turns to the cock of a so-called Æsopic fable: *È da notare, che siccome dice nostro Signore, non si deono le margarite gittare innanzi ai porci; perocchè a loro non è prode, e alle margarite è danno; e, come dice Esopo poeta nella prima Favola, più è prode al gallo un granello di grano, che una margarita; e però questa lascia, e quello ricoglie.*<sup>1</sup> 'It is to be observed that, as our Lord says, pearls should not be cast before swine, for to them it is of no profit and it is harmful to the pearls; and, as Æsop says in the first fable, of more profit to the cock is a grain of corn than a pearl; and therefore he will leave the pearl to pick up the corn.'

Two points in this statement by Dante give a clew to the source of Dante's version of the fable of the Cock and the Pearl. First, Æsop figures as a poet; secondly, Dante says the 'first' fable. Although the fable of the Cock and the Pearl is the twelfth of the third book of Phædrus, this fable appears as the first in the collection of Romulus, a Carolingian writer, who offers the following version:<sup>2</sup> *In sterquilinio quidam gallinacius dum querit escam invenit margaritam in indigno loco iacentem. Quam ut vidit, sic ait: Bona res in stercore iaces. Te si cupidus invenisset, quo gaudio rapuisset, ut redires ad splendorem pristinum decoris tui. Ego te inveni in hoc loco iacentem; potius mihi escam quero. Nec tibi ego*

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* IV, xxx, 36-44.

<sup>2</sup> OESTERLEY, *Romulus*, Berlin, 1870; HERVIEUX, *Fabulistes Latins*, 2d ed., Paris, 1894, vol. II, p. 195.

*prosum nec tu mihi. Hec illis Æsopus narrat qui non intelligunt.*

A metrical version in elegiac distichs, written probably in the twelfth century, to be found in the collection of fables called *Anonymus Neveleti*, which is now ascribed to one Walter of England and various others, reads as follows : —

*Dum rigido fodit ore fimum, dum queritat escam,  
Dum stupet inventa iaspide gallus, ait :  
Res vili preciosa loco natiq̃ue nitoris,  
Hac in sorde iacens nil mihi messis habes, etc.*<sup>1</sup>

‘Since this last occurs in the most widely known fable book of the Middle Ages,’ writes McKenzie,<sup>2</sup> ‘we should expect Dante to have been familiar with it, and his phrase *Esopo poeta* seems to indicate that he, at least, knew some metrical version; yet, since he uses the somewhat rare word *margarita*, and not one corresponding to *iaspide*, it seems likely that he had here the version of Romulus in mind. Perhaps he knew both Romulus and *Anonymus Neveleti* and quoting from memory combined the two; or he may have been influenced in his choice of words by the Vulgate’s, *Nolite dare sanctum canibus; neque mittatis margaritas vestras ante porcos*, etc. (Matthew vii, 6).

‘The old Italian versions, which are prose translations from the *Anonymus Neveleti* and from Marie de France, have *una pietra preziosa*; thus, even if old enough to

<sup>1</sup> HERVIEUX, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 316.

<sup>2</sup> KENNETH MCKENZIE, *Dante’s References to Æsop*, from the *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Dante Society*, Boston, 1900.

have been known to Dante, they did not influence his conception of the fable.'

Of twenty-seven Italian manuscripts of Æsopic fables examined in Italy,<sup>1</sup> some seven<sup>2</sup> give first the fable of the Cock and the Jewel. All these manuscripts are later than Dante's version. Marie de France seems to have been translated into Italian in the second half of the fourteenth century. Now Marie's *Isopet* gives the fables otherwise in the branch called Q than in any other branch, and five of the manuscripts under Q give first the Cock and the Jewel; so in Warnke's *Marie*.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless we have, as has been shown above, evidence that Dante did not derive his fable of the Cock and the Pearl from Marie de France.

<sup>1</sup> MURRAY BRUSH, *The Isopo Laurenziano*, Baltimore, June, 1898, and Columbus, Ohio (Lawrence Press), 1899.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 66.

<sup>3</sup> *Die Fabeln der Marie de France*, Niemeyer, Halle, 1898, p. 6, 'De Gallo et Gemma.'



## CHAPTER LVI

### THE DRAGON

THE Bishop of Ratisbon mentions various kinds of dragons that live in Nubia, Ethiopia, and India, where they are sometimes more than thirty ells long. These dragons have black and yellowish faces, a mouth of great amplitude, eyebrows that cover their eyes, and scales on the neck. Avicenna, an Arabian philosopher of Ispahan in Persia, saw one with long, thick hair that hung down its neck like a horse's mane.

Dragons, continues the bishop, have three teeth in the upper and a like number in the lower jaw, long and sticking out.<sup>1</sup> Isidor of Seville, also a bishop, differs as to the mouth, which he declares to be small and fitted with close-set tubes, through which the dragon breathes and sticks out his tongue.<sup>2</sup> Most authorities, however, are of opinion that the dragon's strength is not in his teeth, but in his tail.<sup>3</sup>

Another characteristic is that when the dragon gets hot he cools off on elephants' blood.<sup>4</sup> As to dragons that emerge from caves and fly aloft, breathing out

<sup>1</sup> ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De Animal.* lib. XXIV, tract. unicus.

<sup>2</sup> ISIDOR, *Etymol.* XII, iv, 4.

<sup>3</sup> ISIDOR, *loc. cit.*; HUGO OF ST. VICTOR, *De Bestiis*, II, 24; BRUNETTO LATINI, *Tresor*, p. 193. See also *Ottimo Commento on Inf.*

XXV, 19. <sup>4</sup> ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *loc. cit.*

quick flames, the Bishop of Ratisbon differs from the Bishop of Seville, going so far as to declare the thing impossible, unless the reference be to certain meteors called dragons, which are enkindled high up, then come hissing down into the water, roaring like white-hot iron.<sup>1</sup> Finally (and here the most substantial authorities are at one), finally, the dragon has a crest or tuft on his head, and is the biggest serpent in the world.

Dante saw two dragons, one in Purgatory and another in Hell. Among the thieves there appeared suddenly a Centaur, Cacus, hotly pursuing a thief.

*Ed io vidi un Centauro pien di rabbia  
Venir chiamando : ' Ov' è, ov' è l' acerbo ?'  
Maremma non cred' io che tante n' abbia  
Quante bische egli avea su per la groppa,  
Infin dove comincia nostra labbia.  
Sopra le spalle, dietro dalla coppa,  
Con l' ali aperte gli giacea un draco,<sup>2</sup>  
E quello affoca qualunque s' intoppa.<sup>3</sup>*

Then I beheld a Centaur swoln with wrath,  
Come shouting : ' Where's that hardened sinner, where ?'  
I guess Maremma fewer serpents hath,  
Fewer than dangling round his flanks he bare,  
To where the beast and human aspect blended ;  
Behind his neck and o'er his shoulders lay  
A fiery dragon, with his wings extended,  
Kindling to flame all shapes that cross his way.

— PARSONS.

<sup>1</sup> Benvenuto da Imola follows Albertus Magnus almost word for word.

<sup>2</sup> *Draco* is a Latinism, here used to rime with *caco* and *laco*.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXV, 17-24.

Unless the Centaur, Cacus, is huge, this dragon must be small, for he finds room enough at the nape of the Centaur's neck; but he is a fire-breather and hot enough to set things aflame.

After the Car of the Church, beheld by Dante in Purgatory, had been assailed by a monstrous eagle and an heretical fox, there rose a dragon out of the earth.

*Poi parve a me che la terra s' aprisse  
Tr' ambo le rote, e vidi uscirne un drago,  
Che per lo carro su la coda fisse;  
E, come vespa che ritragge l' ago  
A sè traendo la coda maligna,<sup>1</sup>  
Trasse del fondo, e gissen vago<sup>2</sup> vago.<sup>3</sup>*

Methought, then, that the earth did yawn between  
Both wheels, and I saw rise from it a dragon,  
Who through the chariot upward fixed his tail,  
And as a wasp that draweth back its sting,  
Drawing unto himself his tail malign,  
Drew out the floor and went his way rejoicing.

— LONGFELLOW.

The other dragon, the one clinging to Cacus, was a demon; but this dragon, which rises from the lower world and tears loose with its stinging tail the very floor of the Church, is the prince of darkness,<sup>4</sup> who knows

<sup>1</sup> ISIDOR, *loc. cit.*, 'Vim autem non in dentibus sed in cauda habet et verbere potiusquam rictu nocet.'

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Purg.* XIX, 22, 'Io volsi Ulisse del suo cammin vago Col canto mio'; *Inf.* VIII, 52, 'Molto sarei vago di vederlo attuffare in questa broda'; *Purg.* XXVIII, 1, 'Vago di cercar . . . La divina foresta.'

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* XXXII, 130-135.

<sup>4</sup> RABANUS MAURUS, *De Univ.* VIII, 3, 'Mystice draco aut diabolus significat, aut ministros ejus, vel etiam persecutores Ecclesiæ,

not only how to take on monstrous shapes, but emerges from Hell, and, having wrought havoc, goes blithely away, — whither, it is hard to tell. The dragon is ferocious in pursuit,<sup>1</sup> like Dante's enemies the Adimari, —

*L' oltracotata schiatta, che s' indraca  
Retro a chi fugge, ed a chi mostra il dente  
O ver la borsa, com' agnel si placa.<sup>2</sup>*

The insolent race, that like a dragon follows  
Whoever flees, and unto him that shows  
His teeth or purse is gentle as a lamb.

— LONGFELLOW.

homines nefandos, cuius mysterium in pluribus locis Scripturæ invenitur.' Cf. Du Cange (2), 'Effigies draconis, quæ cum vexillis in Ecclesiasticis processionibus deferri solet, qua vel diabolus ipse, vel hæresis designantur, de quibus triumphat Ecclesia.' Dragons occur often on medieval cathedrals. Cf., *e.g.*, H. W. SCHULTZ, *Denkmäler*, plates XXXIII, XXXV, XXXVI, XXXVII.

<sup>1</sup> So are fiery meteors, conceived by many medievals to be demons. Cf. ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *loc. cit.*, and A. D. WHITE, *Warfare of Science with Theology*, I, 336-350.

<sup>2</sup> *Parad.* XVI, 115-117.

## CHAPTER LVII

### THE SNAIL — LA LUMACCIA

THERE are land-snails and sea-snails of a thousand varieties, all of which have something in common. To make travel easier, these slow-goers exude a glistening road of slime. Some of them, when not on a journey, can hide away within their shells. Others have only a patch to protect what is most vulnerable. Others still, which we call slugs, are naked. Nearly all wear horns on their faceless heads, and these horns seem at times to give their owner an almost intelligent air.

By the *lumaccia* (nowadays *lumaca*) Italians mean the common slug, and slug is probably what Dante means; yet *lumaccia* is more safely rendered by 'snail.'

In order to make clear a certain point in the transformation of a man into a serpent, and of the serpent into a man, Dante chooses to use the image of a snail:—

*Quel che giacea, il muso innanzi caccia,  
E gli orecchi ritira per la testa,  
Come face le corna la lumaccia.*<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the prostrate thing puts forth its nose,  
And even as its horns a snail draws in,  
Contracts into its head those human ears.

—PARSONS.

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXV, 130-132. Giovanni Villani, IX, cix, 4, 'E dicono che i Lombardi hanno paura della lumaccia, cioè lumaca.' Jacopo della Lana, 'Qui fa comparazione come la lumaca overo chi [o]cciola di sè medesima fa corna,' etc.



## CHAPTER LVIII

### SERPENTS

CHIEFLY from Lucan, Statius, Ovid, Virgil, the early Encyclopedists, and the Bible, Dante gathered much fantastic lore as to various serpents,—their looks and the effects of their poison. These various monsters, whose absence from any well-furnished hell would be surprising,<sup>1</sup> found their place in the Inferno, where they do such wonders as were never imagined by another poet. Serpents are lavishly supplied by Dante. The Furies are ‘girt with greenest hydras,’ and have small, horned serpents for hair.<sup>2</sup> Cacus, the Centaur, bears on his back a mass of snakes; more of them, Dante be-

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy xxxii, 24, ‘I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust.’ Cf. VIRGIL, *Æn.* VI, *passim*. In the Anglo-Saxon ‘*Satan*,’ ‘hwilum nacode men vinnað ymbe vyrmās,’ vs. 136. In Tundal’s Vision, the lost souls, on reaching a certain lake, became pregnant with serpents that used their burning heads, sharp iron beaks, and barbed tails to break out of their victims. Cf. what is said about the Viper, p. 332. See *Scelta di Curios. Lett.* vol. 128, pp. 53–54.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* IX, 40–42. Cf. STATIUS, *Theb.* I, 103 ff. ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De Animalibus*, lib. XXV, tract. unicus, makes the hydra a Nile serpent that slips down the throat of the sleeping crocodile, then tears its way out. Cf. HUGO OF ST. VICTOR, *De Bestiis*, II, cap. 7. Of the cerastes, Albertus Magnus says that it is of dusty hue, hides in the dust, and poisons birds that alight on its horns. Albertus denies that the horns of the cerastes are used at the tables of nobles to betray, by sweating, the presence of poison.

lieves, than would be found in the Marsh (Maremma).<sup>1</sup> These are merely decorative in their way. Others are actively engaged in torturing the damned.

*Noi discendemmo il ponte dalla testa,  
Dove s' aggiunge coll' ottava ripa,  
E poi mi fu la bolgia manifesta :  
E vidivi entro terribile stipa  
Di serpenti, e di sì diversa mena,  
Che la memoria il sangue ancor mi scipa.  
Più non si vanti Libia con sua rena ;<sup>2</sup>  
Chè, se chelidri, iaculi e faree  
Produce, e cencri con amfisibena ;  
Nè tante pestilenze nè sì ree  
Mostrò giammai con tutta l' Etiopia  
Nè con ciò che di sopra il mar rosso ee.<sup>3</sup>  
Tra questa cruda e tristissima copia  
Correvan genti nude e spaventate,  
Senza sperar pertugio o elitropia.  
Con serpi le man dietro avean legate :  
Quelle ficavan per le ren la coda  
E il capo, ed eran dinanzi agropate.<sup>4</sup>*

'We descended the bridge at its head, where it joins on with the eighth bank, and then the pit was apparent to me. And I saw therewithin a terrible heap of serpents, and of such hideous look that the memory still curdles my blood. Let Libya with her sand vaunt herself no more ; for though she brings forth chelydri, jaculi, and phareæ, and cenchri with amphisbœna, she

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXV, 19-21. In Virgil, Cerberus is covered with bristling snakes. See *Æn.* VI, 419. <sup>2</sup> Cf. LUCAN, *Phars.* IX, 706-721.

<sup>3</sup> That is, the Bible tells nothing so dreadful.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* XXIV, 79-96.

never, with all Ethiopia, nor with the land that lies on the Red Sea, showed either so many plagues or so evil.

‘Amid this cruel and most dismal store were running people naked and in terror, without hope of hole or heliotrope. They had their hands tied behind with serpents, which fixed through the reins their tail and their head, and were knotted up in front.’ — NORTON.

Libya was popularly called Barbaria in Dante’s time. Hence, almost with the first word, we have a show of erudition.<sup>1</sup> These uncouth reptiles need a commentary, and the horror is not greater when one discovers that Dante saw monsters even stranger than the amphisbœna, with a head on each end, the smoking chelydrus, and the iaculi that fling themselves, like missiles, from trees.<sup>2</sup>

Bitten by one of these monsters, a sinner burns to ashes, then regains his old form, but suffers as if dragged down by a demon, and sighs.<sup>3</sup> Another blasphemes, and is wound so tightly by two serpents that he cannot budge or speak;<sup>4</sup> and these serpents are demo-

<sup>1</sup> According to H. F. Tozer’s comment, Solinus, Orosius, and the Hereford map mean by Libya the Roman province of Africa to westward of Egypt.

<sup>2</sup> See ISIDOR, *Etymol.* XII, iv, 20; ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De Animal.* lib. XXV, tract. unicus.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXIV, 97–118. He may have been bitten by the dipsas. Cf. Alex. Neckam, Wright’s ed. p. 195. Cf. also Albertus Magnus, lib. XXV, tract. unicus, ‘De natura et diversitate veneni et malitiæ eius in serpentibus.’ One poison, says he, is ‘oppilans vias hanelitus,’ etc. Cf. vs. 114.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* XXV, 1–9. Dante says (vs. 4), ‘Da indi in qua mi fur le serpi amiche.’ Cf. OVID, *Met.* IV, 373, ‘vota suos habuere deos.’

niacal avengers like those that hid under the shield of the goddess when they had strangled Laocoön.<sup>1</sup>

Forestalling our incredulity, Dante says,

Now, O reader ! mark ;  
And if my tale thou slowly shalt receive,  
Thy doubt will cause in me no great surprise ;  
For I, who saw it, hardly can believe.<sup>2</sup>

— PARSONS.

Here follows an astounding scene. A monster with six feet, flinging itself upon a sinner, sticks to him like ivy, and the two beings melt into each other, becoming one.<sup>3</sup>

The twain were blended ; yea, four limbs compressed  
Into two arms their lengths before my view ;  
The legs and thighs, the belly and the chest,  
Became new members, such as ne'er were seen,  
Nor of the former shape appeared a trace :  
And the perverted form, whose mingled mien  
Seemed both, yet neither, passed with lagging pace.<sup>4</sup>

— PARSONS.

Hardly has this infernal miracle been wrought, when a fiery little adder, livid and dark as pepper-grain,<sup>5</sup> darts at the bowels of the two other sinners, and fastening upon

<sup>1</sup> *Æn.* II, 212 ff. Also in Virgil the crowd say Laocoön had atoned for his crime.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XXV, 46-48.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXV, 49-69. Cf. OVID, *Met.* IV, 373 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* XXV, 71-78.

<sup>5</sup> This snake, 'un serpentello acceso, Livido e nero come gran di pepe,' vss. 83-84, seems to be a medley of the chelydrus, the dipsas, and the prester. Albertus Magnus, Hugo of St. Victor, lib. II, cap. 43, and Alex. Neckam, p. 195, Wright's ed., leave the matter doubtful!

one, poisons him. Smoke issues from the two bodies.<sup>1</sup> Snake and sinner eye each other, and the sinner, as if overwhelmed by fever, yawns.<sup>2</sup> Conscious that the horror is becoming real, Dante bids Lucan and Ovid be still; then tells how the two natures were so transfused that the man grew into a serpent and the serpent into a man. One went hissing down the valley; the other, fledged with new shoulders, sputtered and stayed.<sup>3</sup> So close lies the serpent's nature to human turpitude!

These monsters are in Hell. In Purgatory Dante saw, or believes he saw, the serpent that tempted Eve.<sup>4</sup> How did this serpent look? Both St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas discussed the problem without satisfying other thinkers; for medieval manuscripts, ivories,<sup>5</sup> stained glass windows, and other representations never came to agree. Sometimes the Tempter has a man's head; oftener a woman's; sometimes the human element is scarcely traceable, or entirely loses itself in a multitude of reptilian fantasies.

In Purgatory Sordello tells Dante that two angels, 'heavenly goshawks,' are coming from Mary's bosom to guard the valley against the serpent. Presently Sordello speaks to Virgil:—

*Vedi là il nostro avversaro ;  
E drizzò il dito, perchè in là guardasse.  
Da quella parte, onde non ha riparo*

<sup>1</sup> Albertus Magnus and other medievals cite Lucan:—

'Oraque distendens avidus fumantia prester.'

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XXV, 89–90.    <sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXV, 94–141.    <sup>4</sup> *Purg.* XXXII, 32.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. CAHIER, *Mélanges*, vol. II, pls. IV, VII, VIII.



*La picciola vallea, era una biscia,  
 Forse qual diede ad Eva il cibo amaro.  
 Tra l' erba e i fior venia la mala striscia,  
 Volgendo ad or ad or la testa al dosso,  
 Leccando come bestia che si liscia.  
 Io non vidi, e però dicer non posso,  
 Come mosser gli astor celestiali,  
 Ma vidi bene l' uno e l' altro mosso.  
 Sentendo fender l' aere alle verdi ali,  
 Fuggì 'l serpente, e gli angeli dier volta  
 Suso alle poste rivolando eguali.<sup>1</sup>*

“See there our adversary,” and pointed his finger that he should look thither. At that part where the little valley has no barrier was a snake, perhaps such as gave to Eve the bitter food. Through the grass and the flowers came the evil trail, turning from time to time its head to its back, licking like a beast that sleeks itself. I did not see, and therefore cannot tell, how the celestial falcons moved, but I saw well both one and the other in motion. Hearing the air cleft by their green wings the serpent fled, and the angels wheeled about, up to their stations flying back alike.’ — NORTON.

The serpent of Genesis may have had legs, — may have been, indeed, more or less like a crocodile or a dragon, because after his humiliation he was condemned to go on his belly, and it is in this guise that he appeared to Dante, whose angelic hawks are satisfied to drive him out of the valley, — a moderation harder to explain than that of the Eastern hero who, having got the ‘evil genius’ into a bottle, rashly let him out.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* VIII, 95–108. Cf. vs. 102, ‘Leccando come bestia che si liscia,’ with *Æn.* II, 211, ‘Sibila lambebant linguīs vibrantibus ora.’

Dante believed in the serpent of Eden as in other articles of the Faith, and in his treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia* he explains how it was that the serpent could speak clearly, though hissing was its natural tongue.<sup>1</sup> Nor is there any good reason for supposing that Dante did not believe in the many-headed hydra slain by glorious Alcides, whose story he tells.<sup>2</sup> Dante drew upon the classics for his gruesome miracles, and for the myth of Tiresias<sup>3</sup> and the suicide of Cleopatra.<sup>4</sup> From



THE GENERATION OF VIPERS  
From a medieval MS. After  
Cahier

Genesis he got the naturalised serpent seen in Purgatory. It was probably from the 'Physiologus'<sup>5</sup> that he learnt the 'nature' of the viper; for the expression 'generation of vipers,' used by John the Baptist,<sup>6</sup> would not be clear to one not acquainted with the viper's conception and bearing of her young. According to

the Physiologus, the viper conceives through her mouth, and kills her mate (*nimia libidine commota virilia masculi morsu abscidit, et moritur ille*). Having grown inside their mother, the young vipers gnaw through her sides, and thus she is slain. Hence Dante's objurgation of Florence, '*Hæc est vipera versa in viscera genetricis*' (She is a viper turned upon the entrails of her own mother),<sup>7</sup> and it is to this story that he refers in

<sup>1</sup> *De V. E.* I, ii, 43-52. See chapter on 'Man,' p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Epist.* VII, 113-121. <sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XX, 44. <sup>4</sup> *Parad.* VI, 76-78.

<sup>5</sup> See LAUCHERT, *Geschichte des Physiologus*, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> Luke iii, 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Epist.* VII, vii, 143-144.

making Nino say that the Cock of Gallura would have made his wife a better escutcheon for her tomb than she will get from the Viper that marshals the Milanese afield.<sup>1</sup> The arms of the Visconti, which afterward became the coat of the Duchy of Milan, were, Argent, a serpent ondoyant in pale azure, crowned with a ducal crown or, and vorant a child gules.<sup>2</sup>

Like most of mankind, Dante abhorred snakes. Virtue, says he of evil-doers, is shunned like a serpent.<sup>3</sup> In the Suicides' wood he innocently plucked a twig, when the trunk cried out: 'Why dost thou rend me, why dost thou tear me? Art thou pitiless? Men we were, and now we are turned to stumps. Thy hand should have been more merciful had we been souls of serpents.'<sup>4</sup>

Borrowing from Virgil, Dante says Fortune lurks like a snake in the grass;<sup>5</sup> borrowing perhaps from Aristotle,<sup>6</sup> perhaps applying an observation of his own, Dante writes to his countrymen that peace and joy are at hand if the old sin, which, serpent-like, twists and turns upon itself, does not stand in the way.<sup>7</sup> There is less bookishness and more beauty in a simple description of frogs driven out of their pool by a water-snake, and this is the only convincingly truthful touch of snake life in all Dante. Virgil and he catch the sound of something fleeing toward them over a great infernal pool.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* VIII, 79-81.

<sup>2</sup> See WOODWARD, *Heraldry, British and Foreign*, I, 288.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* XIV, 37-39.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* XIII, 31-39.

<sup>5</sup> *Inf.* VII, 84. Cf. VIRGIL, *Ecl.* III, 92-93.

<sup>6</sup> *De Part. Animalium*, lib. IV, cap. 11.

<sup>7</sup> *Epist.* VI, vi, 94-96.

*Gli occhi mi sciolse, e disse : ' Or drizza il nerbo  
 Del viso su per quella schiuma antica,  
 Per indi ove quel fummo è più acerbo.'  
 Come le rane innanzi alla nimica  
 Biscia per l' acqua si dileguan tutte,  
 Fin che alla terra ciascuna s' abbica ;  
 Vid' io più di mille anime distrutte  
 Fuggir così dinanzi ad un, che al passo  
 Passava Stige colle piante asciutte.<sup>1</sup>*

Mine eyes he loosed, and said : ' Direct the nerve  
 Of vision now along that ancient foam,  
 There yonder where that smoke is most intense.'  
 Even as the frogs before the hostile serpent  
 Across the water scatter all abroad,  
 Until each one is huddled on the earth,  
 More than a thousand ruined souls I saw,  
 Thus fleeing from before one who on foot  
 Was passing o'er the Styx on soles unwet.

— LONGFELLOW.

Tales of fabulous serpents came into Europe from the East. Ovid's serpents and those of Virgil are exotic. Lucan's monstrosities dwelt in Libya,<sup>2</sup> a land which medieval writers supposed to swarm with devils. Dante's notions are, with a single exception, of bookish origin, and only a credulity unlikely in any modern reader of Dante could make such conceptions really horrible. Dante himself was conscious of his own literary craft in the handling of his infernal serpents. They were almost the playthings of his imagination.

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* IX, 73-81.

<sup>2</sup> And in his second Eclogue, vs. 23, Dante says : —

' Et Libyus coluber quod squama verrat arenas,  
 Non miror.'

## CHAPTER LIX

### THE EYE-LIZARD (?)—IL RAMARRO

To denote the speed of a demoniacal adder, darting upon two thieves in Hell, Dante says:—

*Come il ramarro, sotto la gran fersa  
De' dì canicular cangiando siepe,<sup>1</sup>  
Folgore par, se la via attraversa;<sup>2</sup>  
Così pareva, venendo verso l' epe  
Degli altri due, un serpentello acceso,  
Livido e nero come gran di pepe.<sup>3</sup>*

As the swift lizard, 'neath the scourging ray  
Of dog-star time, seems lightning, if by chance  
Flitting from hedge to hedge, it cross the way,  
So did a fiery little adder glance  
Straight at the bowels of the other two,  
A livid snake, and black as pepper's grain.

—PARSONS.

Writing of this fiery adder (*serpentello acceso*), Gelli says: 'It was coming with such velocity that Dante likens it to a *ramarro*, a very well-known animal like

<sup>1</sup> Cf. VIRGIL *Ecl.* II, 9, 'Nunc virides etiam occultant spineta lacertos.'

<sup>2</sup> Cf. HORACE, *Od.* lib. III, xxvii, 5:—

'Rumpat et serpens iter institutum,  
Si per obliquum similis sagittæ  
Terruit mannos.'

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* XXV, 80-84.



the lizard, but much larger and much greener in colour and far more beautiful, and with its skin dotted over with certain spots that shine so that they seem like little stars (*stelloline*); for which reason the Latins call it *stellio*; and it is exceedingly swift in its movements, and more especially so in seasons of heat, so that the hotter is the season, the stronger it gets and the more swiftly it runs.' <sup>1</sup>

Jacopo della Lana,<sup>2</sup> seeming to mean the same creature, gives it the same fabulous trait of attacking a man as is described by the author of the *Libro del Gandolfo Persiano*,<sup>3</sup> who recommends that the moulting of a falcon be helped along by feeding her on '*Carne del rospo grande, che trovi de marzo, e de la luserta verde che si chiama ligoro e marro calopio, zoe che prende lo homo e non lasa.*' That this writer fails to mention the dotting stars is of small weight. Not only do he, Jacopo della Lana, Benvenuto da Imola, and Gelli substantially agree, but, curiously enough, some friends of Mr. W. W. Vernon saw at Florence, in August, 1891, 'two large-sized lizards, answering to the description given above, that had been caught in the Cascine, exhibited close by the Piazza della Signoria, and they heard them called both *ramarro* and *lucertolone*, — more

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by VERNON, *Readings, Inf.* II, p. 328.

<sup>2</sup> 'Ramarro è una spezie di ferucole velenose, e sono appellate magrassi ovvero liguro [in Lombard dialect] li quali al tempo del gran caldo appariscono nelle strade, e sono molto paurosi animali, che come vegiono l' uomo, e gittam seli addosso e quello che in bocca è mai non lassano, o elli fuggano come folgore, cioe velocissimamente.'

<sup>3</sup> In *Scelta di Curios. Lett.*, vol. 144, chap. 105.

frequently the latter.' Mr. Vernon speaks of having run across this rare species at Cannes and Mentone.<sup>1</sup>

In a word, then, the *ramarro* of Dante is probably not the ordinary little green lizard of Italy, but a larger and rarer kind, beautifully dotted with stars. Yet nearly all lizards may be seen flashing across roads from hedge to hedge, and the heat of dog-days only heightens their activity.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Readings on Inf.*, vol. II, pp. 327-329.

## CHAPTER LX

### THE SCORPION

GERYON, the man-faced demon, has an unusual tail.

*Nel vano tutta sua coda guizzava  
Torcendo in su la venenosa forca,  
Che, a guisa di scorpion, la punta armava.*<sup>1</sup>

His tail was wholly quivering in the void,  
Contorting upwards the envenomed fork,  
That in the guise of scorpion armed its point.

— LONGFELLOW.

A real scorpion has nippers like a lobster, but its tail tapers down to the poisonous telson or sting. What, then, can Dante mean? Geryon's tail ends in a poisonous fork, but also in a point like that of a scorpion. 'Fork' and 'point' seem contradictory terms, due, perhaps, to a confusion in the poet's mind of the scorpion's nippers and of its tail, or, it may be, to a misunderstanding of the word *unca*, in this line of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (XV, 371):—

*Scorpius exhibit, caudaque minabitur unca.*

Such an explanation, however, seems far less likely than the other. At all events, Dante's anatomising of Geryon's tail seems to contain a flaw. A scorpion, having seized its prey with the nippers, makes sure of the

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XVII, 25-27.

victim by twisting upward and forward the venomous sting.

When Dante says that 'the concubine of old Tithonus was glowing in the east, her brow glittering with gems set in the shape of the cold animal that stings people with its tail,' he means the scorpion.<sup>1</sup>

*Di gemme la sua fronte era lucente,  
Poste in figura del freddo animale,  
Che con la coda percote la gente.*<sup>2</sup>

Benvenuto da Imola adds to our astrological lore by declaring that the Sign of the Scorpion gives to man a poison not less black and deadly than the cold scorpion. For, he relates, one Guido of Forlì writes of having seen in Arabia a great astrolabe wherein were figured all the zodiacal signs, and in the sign of the Scorpion was figured an Ethiopian holding certain filth to his nose as a token that those born in the sign of the Scorpion delight in filth and other such things.

Dante may have believed this, but this is not what he says; for his words refer not to the influence of the zodiacal scorpion, but to the fact that the stars rose in the shape of the cold animal that stings with its tail. From the scorpion's habit of lurking in a dank place or under stones Dante may have got the idea of its being cold. The epithet is by no means conventional in the zoölogical lore of the Middle Ages.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the important observations of DR. EDWARD MOORE in his *Accenni al Tempo nella Divina Commedia*, Florence, 1900, pp. 90-101. The citation from Brunetto Latini on page 92 seems to me of little value; there was too great disagreement among medieval writers as to the nature of serpents' poison. <sup>2</sup> *Purg.* IX, 4-6.

## CHAPTER LXI

### THE WORM. THE CATERPILLAR. THE BUTTERFLY

DANTE berates Satan as the 'guilty worm that pierceth the world,'<sup>1</sup> and the demon Cerbero is 'the great worm.'<sup>2</sup> The drops of blood and tears that fall from the sluggards stung by wasps and gadflies are gathered up by 'loathsome worms.'<sup>3</sup> These maggots seen by the poet in Hell suggest the words of Job, 'I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXXIV, 108. Dante's Lucifer is of flesh and blood, but symbolises the evil conscience of the world, and in this sense recalls the words of Isaiah lxvi, 24, 'And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die [Vulg., *vermis eorum non morietur*], neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorrence unto all flesh.' Cf. RABANUS MAURUS, *De Univ.* lib. VIII, cap. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* VI, 22-23:—

'Quando ci scorse Cerbero, il gran vermo,  
Le bocche aperse, e mostrocci le sanne:  
Non avea membro che tenesse fermo.'

I hope to discuss elsewhere than in this book the relation of these verses to those in the Penitential Psalm attributed to Dante by a very few persons. See Oxford Dante, p. 193, vss. 10-12:—

'Difendimi, O Signor, dallo gran vermo,  
E sanami, imperò ch' io non ho osso,  
Che conturbato possa omai star fermo.'

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* III, 67-69. See citation from Isaiah above, note 1. Cf. also *Conv.* IV, vii, 106-107, 'Veramente morto il malvagio uomo dire si può.'



mother and my sister' (Job xvii, 14). They are the basest of all the creatures that writhe or crawl in the Under World, baser than the worms of Tundal's Vision; for they were busy gnawing sensual sinners 'both night and day,' and their victims were clerics and others who had worn the cloak of religion.<sup>1</sup> Dante's sluggards suffer a fate not unlike that of many a wretch in his time, and, though the conception be scriptural, the description vivifies a sickening feature of life in the Middle Ages.

The silk industry was new then, having reached Sicily through the Arabs in 1130, and then Calabria, whence it spread over Italy. Silk weavers thrived at Lucca from 1242 to 1314, when the Luccans fell out with Florence, and the weavers were driven to other cities.<sup>2</sup> Dante, ever ready for a new image, makes a spirit in Paradise say to him:—

My gladness keepeth me concealed from thee,  
Which rayeth round about me, and doth hide me  
Like as a creature swathed in its own silk.

— LONGFELLOW.

*La mia letizia mi ti tien celato,  
Che mi raggia dintorno, e mi nasconde  
Quasi animal di sua seta fasciato.*<sup>3</sup>

Here is perhaps the first allusion to the silkworm in modern literature. But there is more grace in the words of a spirit in Purgatory, who, with science delicately concealed, tells how the caterpillar is to become the angelic butterfly.

<sup>1</sup> In *Scelta di Curios. Lett.* vol. 128, pp. 45-46.

<sup>2</sup> See *La Grande Encyclopédie*, s.v. 'Soie,' p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> *Parad.* VIII, 52-54.

*Non v' accorgete voi, che noi siam vermi  
 Nati a formar l' angelica farfalla,<sup>1</sup>  
 Che vola alla giustizia senza schermi ?  
 Di che l' animo vostro in alto galla,  
 Poi siete quasi entomata<sup>2</sup> in difetto,  
 Sì come vermo, in cui formazion falla ?<sup>3</sup>*

Perceive ye not that man is but a worm  
 Born to produce the angelic butterfly

<sup>1</sup> With verses 124–125 cf. ARISTOTLE, *De Hist. Animalium*, lib. V, 'De iis insectorum generibus, quæ aut ex erucis, aut ex vermibus, aut ex fimo gignuntur.' — 'What are called butterflies, however, are generated from caterpillars; but caterpillars are generated from green leaves, and especially from raphanos, which some call cabbage. And at first something less than a grain of millet is produced; afterward small worms originate from this, and these increasing, in the space of three days are formed into caterpillars. Such caterpillars, also, when increased, cease from motion, change their form, and are called chrysalides, or aureliæ. In this state, likewise, they are enclosed in a hard shell; but move if they are touched. The chrysalides are, also, enclosed in cavities which resemble the webs of spiders, but they neither have a mouth, nor is any other part apparent. In a short time, too, the shell bursts and winged animals fly out of it, which we call butterflies.' ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De Animal.* lib. XXVI, tract. unicus, 'Papiliones sunt vermes volantes multorum colorum.' In lib. XVII, tract. ii, cap. 1., Albertus follows Aristotle rather closely in statement as to origin and development of butterflies. ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De Animal.* lib. XVII, tract. ii, cap. 1, 'Dicamus ergo, quod animalium natura etiam sic dividitur, quod quædam generant animalia completa, et quædam incompleta, sicut vermes.' Again, *ibid.*, ALBERTUS MAGNUS, describing how Nature prepares the creation of the eggs before the time of ovation, says, 'Et facit hoc in verme qui ultimam completionem non habuit: ultimo enim non est completus, nisi quando volat,' etc.

<sup>2</sup> For *entomata* — a word which I have not noticed in any medieval work on zoölogy — see ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De Animal.* lib. XVII, tract. ii, cap. 1, *ad fin.* See also H. F. Tozer's comment.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* 124–130.

That with no screening shall to Justice fleet ?  
 For what should human spirit mount so high ?  
 Ye are as wingèd creatures, incomplete,  
 Even as the worm is, not formed perfectly.

— PARSONS.

The Greeks<sup>1</sup> had one word for the butterfly and for the soul, — *psyche*, — and the epitaph of a Roman tippler refers to his soul as a ‘drunken butterfly’ — *MEUS EBRIUS PAPILIO*. This sad conception of our mortality, so familiar in ancient art, is thus hopefully perpetuated in the half-scientific, half-poetic lines of Dante.

<sup>1</sup> For a less Greek, more Christian conception of the disembodied soul, cf. the *Cantilena of Saint Eulalia*, — a poem of the ninth century printed in *Chrestomathie de l’Ancien Français* of BARTSCH AND HORNING, col. 6, 7th ed. Having first ordered Eulalia to be burnt, the heathen king commanded that she be beheaded.

‘La domnizelle celle kose non contredist,  
 Volt lo seule lazsier, si ruovet Krist.  
 In figure de colomb volat a ciel.  
 Tuit oram, que por nos degnet preier,’ etc.

## CHAPTER LXII

### THE FLY AND GADFLY. THE FLEA. THE WASP

UNTIL evolution had made clear to thinking men that every creature in the known universe exists for its own sake without divine reference to man, theologians and their flocks universally followed the Babylonian myth of creation. According to this myth, God gave Adam dominion over all living things. This and other Eastern legends found their way into the West, and appealed so strongly to anthropocentric conceit that there arose a belief that all creatures harmful to man were agents of Satan. A certain Richalmus, who flourished about 1270, declared it a mistake to think that we are really bitten by lice and fleas, since it is actually devils who torment men in this fashion.<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther was only accepting an old superstition in thinking flies to be demons. They annoyed him when he was reading. 'I hate flies,' said he, 'because they are likenesses of the devil and of heretics.'<sup>2</sup> The simple-minded and a few others still wonder why God created mosquitoes.

Dante obviously believed in the demoniacal quality of certain animals. Dogs he portrays as bothered in summer by fleas, or flies, or gadflies, and the torture de-

<sup>1</sup> See ROSKOFF, *Geschichte des Teufels*, I, 340-341.

<sup>2</sup> In *Table-talk*. Cited by A. D. WHITE, *Warfare of Science with Theology*, I, 31.

scribed is true to the life.<sup>1</sup> But in Hell he observed a demoniacal scene. Those who had been sluggish in the earthly life were undergoing a special torture.

*Questi sciaurati, che mai non fur vivi,  
Erano ignudi e stimolati molto  
Da mosconi<sup>2</sup> e da vespe<sup>3</sup> ch' erano ivi.  
Elle<sup>4</sup> rigavan lor di sangue il volto,  
Che mischiato di lagrime, ai lor piedi,  
Da fastidiosi vermi era ricolto.<sup>5</sup>*

These miscreants, who never were alive,  
Were naked and were stung exceedingly  
By gadflies and by hornets that were there.  
These did their faces irrigate with blood,  
Which, with their tears commingled, at their feet  
By the disgusting worms was gathered up.

— LONGFELLOW.

Not only are these insects present in Dante's Hell, which is a real hell and not a state of mind,<sup>6</sup> but they are partial to a certain class of sinners. Their selection is excellent. They show, indeed, a discretion unusual in the hornets and wasps of real life, which sting philosophers, saints, and pickpockets impartially.

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XVII, 49-51. Cf. *Purg.* XXXII, 133, where Dante marks that the wasp draws out its sting. See p. 323.

<sup>2</sup> Literally 'large flies,' perhaps gadflies or hornets in a modern sense. Brunetto Latini calls honeybees 'flies.' 'Besainnes sont les mosches qui font le miel,' *Tresor*, p. 206. Benvenuto da Imola, 'Genus muscarum et vesparum.'

<sup>3</sup> ARISTOTLE, *De Hist. Animal.* IX, 41, distinguishes two kinds of wasps; then adds of one class, 'All these, however, . . . have stings . . . and the wound which they inflict is more painful,' etc.

<sup>4</sup> Feminine by attraction to *vespe*, but of course refers both to *vespe* and *mosconi*. <sup>5</sup> *Inf.* III, 64-69. <sup>6</sup> See Introduction, p. 9.



## CHAPTER LXIII

### THE FIREFLY — LA LUCCIOLA

By a single touch of nature not only does Dante make time visible, reminding us (as mere arithmetic cannot) of the evening hour, but he has hit on the only image in all nature perfectly fitted to its end. Moving lights far off in the gloom are the flames that envelop and hide the Evil Counsellors. Dante scans them from a high bridge, as he must many a time have looked out upon his own Italian landscape in the growing darkness. This is the image of those flames:—

*Quante il villan, ch' al poggio si riposa,  
Nel tempo che colui che il mondo schiara  
La faccia sua a noi tien meno ascosa,  
Come la mosca cede alla zenzara,  
Vede lucciole giù per la valle,  
Forse colà dove vendemmia ed ara;  
Di tante fiamme tutta risplendea  
L' ottava bolgia, sì com' io m' accorsi,  
Tosto ch' io fui là 've il fondo pareo.<sup>1</sup>*

As in that season, when with less concealed  
A face he shines who floods the world with light,  
When to the gnat the weary fly doth yield,  
The peasant, resting on some neighbour height,  
Beholds the fireflies in the vale below,

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXVI, 25–33. Cf. *Æn.* XI, 207 ff.

Wherein he ploughs, or trims his vines, perchance,  
So many flames this eighth pit, all aglow,  
Showed when its depths I fathomed with my glance.

— PARSONS.

It is only a touch, but the touch is true.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> VERNON, in his *Readings* (*Inf.* vol. I, p. 357), remarks on the conspicuousness of these insects in Italy. He has lived there, and is good authority for those who have not observed this phenomenon at home. The commentary called 'Ottimo,' and Longfellow, take Dante's *luciole* to mean glowworms, an interpretation not very adequately warranted by the details of Dante's description.

## CHAPTER LXIV

### THE LOCUST OR GRASSHOPPER

*Mele e locuste furon le vivande  
Che nutriro il Battista nel deserto;  
Perch' egli è glorioso, e tanto grande,  
Quanto per l' Evangelio v' è aperto.<sup>1</sup>*

Honey and locusts were the aliments  
That fed the Baptist in the wilderness;  
Whence he is glorious, and so magnified  
As by the Evangel is revealed to you.

— LONGFELLOW.

DANIELLO<sup>2</sup> comments thus, 'Not grasshoppers, as some foolishly believe, for it would be a mistake to believe that so great a saint nourished himself on such food; but he [Dante] means the very tender tips of trees, shrubs, and herbs.' Sancta simplicitas! Not only is there no warrant in any other passage for thus

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* XXII, 151-154.

<sup>2</sup> Cited by Scartazzini. ST. AMBROSE (*Expos. in Lucam*, lib. II) explains why locusts were so proper a food for the saint, dissenting from the opinion of various wiseacres who declared that the ἀκρίδες (Vulgate *locustas*) were sprouts, grass, or shrubbery. Indeed, these locusts were, by a widely popular allegory, conceived as meaning the peoples once without 'King Christ,' without a prophet, without a teacher, now gathered in the faith and hastening to the spiritual onslaught against the devil. See the VENERABLE BEDE on Proverbs xxx and Ecclesiastes xii, and GREGORY THE GREAT, *Moral. in Job*, xxxix, 20, lib. xxxi, 25 (No. 45 sq. t. III, 287).

interpreting the Latin *locustas*,<sup>1</sup> but there is, furthermore, no evidence in the Latin vocabulary to justify Daniello, much less Dante. The poet, no doubt, understood that John the Baptist fed on honey and grasshoppers, — not so revolting a diet to certain Orientals as to a European.<sup>2</sup> The line in Dante shows, not that the poet looked upon such fare as loathsome, but as ennobling because of its ascetic simplicity. It hardly seems as if Dante could have been in a prophetic mood when he said : —

*Daniello*

*Dispregiò cibo, ed acquistò sapere.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Locustas et mel silvestre edebat.' Mark i, 6; Matthew iii, 4.

<sup>2</sup> See citations in comment of Scartazzini.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.* XXII, 146-147, 'Daniel despised food and acquired learning.'

## CHAPTER LXV

### THE SPIDER

IN his letter to the Italian cardinals,<sup>1</sup> Dante declares that cupidity is getting the better of men, then says, *Jacet Gregorius tuus in telis araneorum*<sup>2</sup> (Thy Gregory is lying amidst cobwebs). So, in Proverbs (xxx, 28) it is said that the spider taketh hold with her hands and is in kings' palaces. Since Dante is bemoaning the decline of theology and the popularity of law, he clearly means, not that Gregory the Great has fallen victim to spiders, but that he lies neglected and forgotten.

Once more, borrowing from Ovid for the adornment of his Purgatory, he refers to the metamorphosis of Arachne into a spider. Having mentioned alternately various characters from Hebrew or pagan mythology whose pride had caused them to be sculptured in Purgatory, Dante cries :—

*O folle Aragne, sì vedea io te  
Già mezza aragna<sup>3</sup> trista in su gli stracci  
Dell' opera che mal per te si fe'.<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Oxford Dante, pp. 411-413.

<sup>2</sup> vii, 114.

<sup>3</sup> As Scartazzini has pointed out, this form is a Latinism due to the desire to maintain the classic pun, which, by the way, was much more obvious in the two identical words of the Greek than in the Ovidian imitation.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* XII, 43-45. This passage has no bearing on Dante's knowledge of nature. Whether he believed in the actuality of the



Thee, mad Arachne, there  
 I saw, half spider, fumbling the deplored  
 Shreds of that work which wrought for thee despair.

— PARSONS.

occurrence or not is another question. I cite in full the familiar passage in Ovid, without which Dante's mention is so slight as to be nearly unintelligible to readers not thoroughly versed in mythology (OVID, *Met.* VI, 139 ff.):—

' Post ea discedens succis Hecateidos herbæ  
 sparsit; et extemplo tristi medicamine tactæ  
 defluxere comæ, cum quis et naris et aures,  
 fitque caput minimum. Toto quoque corpore parva est:  
 in latere exiles digiti pro cruribus hærent,  
 cetera venter habet; de quo tamen illa remittit  
 stamen, et antiquas exercet aranea telas.  
 Lydia tota fremit, Phrygiæque per oppida facti  
 rumor it et magnum sermonibus occupat orbem.  
 Ante suos Niobe thalamos cognoverat illam,  
 tum cum Mæoniam virgo Sipylumque colebat;  
 nec tamen admonita est poena popularis Arachnes,  
 cedere cælitibus verbisque minoribus uti.'

## CHAPTER LXVI

### THE ANT

THOUGH Dante gave credence to more than a few myths of the animal kingdom, both from the sacred books of the Hebrews<sup>1</sup> and from Græco-Roman literature,<sup>2</sup> he seems to have cited the legend of the Myrmidons as a legend. With one eye upon Ovid<sup>3</sup> and the other on the *Divine Comedy*, he tells how everything in pest-ridden Ægina died, even to the little worm.

. . . *e poi le genti antiche,  
Secondo che i poeti hanno per fermo,  
Si ristorar di seme di formiche.*<sup>4</sup>

. . . and, afterwards, as bards declare,  
The ancient races were restored again  
From seed of ants. — PARSONS.

The higher seriousness of Dante's style often seems to imply on his part a belief in the fancies of folklore or of superstition.

An impression received in religious ecstasy, through the most primitive ignorance of natural laws, or in the hallucination of disease, is sifted by the popular mind and converted slowly into a fable. If the fable origi-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Inf.* XXVI, 34-36; De V. E. I, ii, vii, etc.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. chapters on 'Panther,' p. 132; 'Dolphin,' p. 207, etc.

<sup>3</sup> *Met.* VII, 523 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* XXIX, 62-64.

nated amongst the Hebrews it becomes, if strong enough, a poetic dogma of Christendom. If the same or a like fable is borrowed from pagan sources the medieval poet or philosopher may conceive it to be true only as an allegory; or, on the other hand, may simply exploit it to embellish matter of his own. That Dante suspected the Ovidian version of the ants (*μύρμηκες*) turning into Myrmidons is rendered likely, yet not proved, by the line,

*Secondo che i poeti hanno per fermo.*<sup>1</sup>

Be this as it may, the allusion is but a cold fragment of mythology, and, therefore, throws little or no light on Dante's knowledge of nature.

In Purgatory Dante saw the 'shades' so fulfilling one of those almost automatic operations<sup>2</sup> of that safe but uncomfortable region in such wise as to suggest to him a delightful touch of nature.

*Lì veggio d' ogni parte farsi presta  
Ciascun' ombra, e baciarsi una con una,  
Senza restar, contente a breve festa :  
Così per entro loro schiera bruna<sup>3</sup>  
S' ammusca l' una con l' altra formica,  
Forse ad espiar lor via e lor fortuna.*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* XXIX, 63.

<sup>2</sup> This action of the 'shades' is based on the apostolic 'Salutate invicem in osculo sancto' (Romans xvi, 16; 1 Corinthians xvi, 20; 2 Corinthians xiii, 12, etc. See Scartazzini on *Purg.* xxvi, 32). Cf. chapter on 'The Bee,' p. 357, where the same psychic phenomenon takes place in Dante.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Schiera bruna* and *It nigrum campis agmen*, *Æn.* IV, 404, cited by Scartazzini.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* XXVI, 31-36.

There see I hastening upon either side  
 Each of the shades, and kissing one another  
 Without a pause, content with brief salute.  
 Thus in the middle of their brown battalions,  
 Muzzle to muzzle one ant meets another,  
 Perchance to spy their journey or their fortune.

— LONGFELLOW.

Here is a word or two with a Virgilian turn, but there is a stronger similarity to a description in Pliny — a description which Dante may have found as a citation, if not in Pliny. Pliny exclaims: . . . *jam in opere qui labor, quæ sedulitas! et quoniam ex diverso convehunt, altera alterius ignara, certi dies ad recognitionem mutuam nundinis dantur. Quæ tunc earum concursatio, quam diligens cum obviis quædam conlocutio atque percontatio.* (In working how they toil! What assiduity! And since they fetch their provisions without one another's knowledge from divers parts, they have certain market days for a mutual understanding. And then what a thronging! One might think they stopped for a talk, and taking in of stock with others met on the way.)<sup>1</sup>

Pliny adds that pebbles are worn down by them in the making of a path, and Aristotle affirms they go over the same roads, and are seen to work not only by day, but under the full moon.<sup>2</sup>

Dante's description by the mere word *s' ammus* — a beautifully accurate observation — becomes his own. Yet, strange to say, the poet has once more forgotten his dogmas, and added the unsuspected touch that makes the animals — all other animals — and man akin.

<sup>1</sup> *Nat. Hist.* XI, 109.

<sup>2</sup> *De Hist. Animal.* IX, 38.

## CHAPTER LXVII

### THE BEE

DANTE affirms in the Banquet<sup>1</sup> that 'one might arrive at a knowledge of bees by reasoning about the fruit of their wax as well as by reasoning about the fruit of their honey, though both come from them,' — leaving us to infer that the ordinary procedure is to know them by their honey. This thought, suggested, it may be, by the Biblical phrase, 'By their fruits ye shall know them,' shows that Dante, like his contemporaries and forerunners, recognised in the bee an animal well fitted to point and embellish discussions of man and his morals.<sup>2</sup> It shows also (curiously enough) that in Dante's time the bee was valued less as a maker of wax than as a maker

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.* IV, xvii, 123–132, 'Onde, perciocchè le Virtù morali paiono essere e sieno più comuni e più sapute, e più richieste che l'altre, e unite nell' aspetto di fuori, utile e convenevole fu più per quello cammino procedere che per altro; chè così bene si verrebbe alla conoscenza delle api per lo frutto della cera ragionando, come per lo frutto del mele, tutto che l'uno e l'altro da loro proceda.' Cf. the following from a *Tusco-Venetian Bestiary*, edited by Goldstaub and Wendriner, Halle, 1892, p. 17, 'L' apa si e una criatura di pizolla aparenza et (d) e (e) di gran fruto; et (d) e molta savia criatura, che 'l suo fruto si e miele et zera.'

<sup>2</sup> Cf. PLINY, *Nat. Hist.* II, 41. SENECA, *Clement.* I, 19, 'Utinam eadem homini lex esset, quæ apibus, et ira cum telo frangere-tur!' BRUNETTO LATINI, *Tresor*, pp. 206–208. See note 1, p. 357.



of honey, which was generally if not always used throughout Europe instead of sugar in Dante's time.<sup>1</sup>

Psychic and moral problems are the deep-toned background whereon Dante paints the brighter, more appreciable, more beautiful pictures of life. Of this there is hardly any better witness than Dante's bees. Puzzled by the mystery of our inborn inclinations, our 'love' given us by an 'outer' power, Dante appeals to Virgil, and learns that man cannot know whence comes to him the intelligence of the first notions nor the affection for the first allurements, which are in us

. . . sì come studio<sup>2</sup> in ape  
Di far lo mele; e questa prima voglia<sup>3</sup>  
Merto di lode o di biasmo non cape.<sup>4</sup>

. . . as instinct in the bee  
To make its honey; and this first desire  
Merit of praise or blame containeth not.

— LONGFELLOW.

Surely here is a doctrine unwittingly hostile to the dogma of original sin!

If the moralist has in this instance outweighed the artist, the latter will reassert himself, and the bees will be compared to the angels as were the rooks or daws, a phenomenon of actual bee life being offered as a likeness of a scene which the bees themselves suggested to the

<sup>1</sup> See article on 'Sugar,' *Encyc. Brit.* 9th ed., p. 625, col. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Scartazzini cites Virgil's wish to tell of the bees (*Georg.* IV, v, 5), 'Mores et *studia* et populos et prœlia dicam' (Of their ways and zealous aims and peoples and battles I shall tell).

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 78-81.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.* XVIII, 58-60.

poet's mind. Putting to good use a figure borrowed, in all probability, from St. Anselm or St. Bernard,<sup>1</sup> Dante likens the passing to and fro of the angels from the gleaming heavenly rose composed of the Blessed, to the going and coming of bees from flower to hive.

*In forma dunque di candida rosa  
Mi si mostrava la milizia santa,  
Che nel suo sangue Cristo fece sposa.  
Ma l' altra, che volando vede e canta  
La gloria di colui che la innamora  
E la bontà che la fece cotanta,  
Sì come schiera d' api che s' infiora  
Una fiata, ed una si ritorna  
Là dove suo lavoro s' insapora,  
Nel gran fior discendeva, che s' adorna  
Di tante foglie; e quindi risaliva  
Là dove il suo Amor sempre soggiorna.<sup>2</sup>*

In fashion then as of a snow-white rose  
Displayed itself to me the heavenly host,  
Whom Christ in his own blood had made his bride,  
But the other host that flying sees and sings  
The glory of him who doth enamour it,  
And the goodness that created it so noble,  
Even as a swarm of bees, that sinks in flowers  
One moment and the next returns again  
To where its labour is to sweetness turned,  
Sank into the great flower that is adorned  
With leaves so many, and thence reascended  
To where its love abideth evermore.

— LONGFELLOW.

<sup>1</sup> See Scartazzini's comment on *Parad.* XXXI, 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Parad.* XXXI, 1-12.

It is safe to say that this whole description could never have occurred to Dante, nor to any other poet, save through the existence of bees, and at least an artist's observation of their ways. The observation is not wholly Dante's; for Virgil was a student of the bees, and bequeathed to his disciples certain verses<sup>1</sup> which seem to have expanded and turned from silver into gold in the magic crucible of Dante.

At another moment in the production of his *Divine Comedy* these same industrious bees suggested to the poet's much-seeing, much-hearing mind a fine simile to express a rumbling of water heard by him in the depths of Hell.

*Già era in loco ove s' udia il rimbombo  
Dell' acqua che cadea nell' alto giro,  
Simile a quel che l' arnie fanno rombo.*<sup>2</sup>

Now where I stood I heard the rumbling sound,  
Like swarms of bees that round their beehives hum,  
Of water falling to the other round.

— PARSONS.

<sup>1</sup> *Æn.* I, 430-431: —

'Quales apes æstate nova per florea rura.  
Exercet sub sole labor.'

(As the bees in springtime throughout the flowery country are busied by their toil beneath the sun.) And *Æn.* VI, 707-709: —

'Ac velut in pratis, ubi apes æstate serena  
Floribus insidunt variis, et candida circum  
Lilia funduntur et strepit omnis murmure campus.'

(And as in the meadows, where in the peaceful season the bees settle in various flowers, swarming about the gleaming lilies, and every field doth hum.)

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* XVI, 1-3. Cf. this by the author of the *Carm. Philom.* 36: —

'Bombitat ore legens munera mellis apis.'

Could any other figure have made us hear so well the distant roar of the infernal waters as the familiar buzzing by their hives of many bees? Dante knew how to quicken the dead, and he likewise understood how to effect a credible illusion of reality in impossible things through an almost continuous reference to actual life.

## CHAPTER LXVIII

### CONCLUSION

WE may now look back upon our long study and seek to make plain some of the cardinal facts in Dante's conception of the animal kingdom, but first we may well inquire what mainly is the distribution of references to animals throughout Dante's works.

In the treatise *De Aqua et Terra*, which is probably authentic,<sup>1</sup> no animal is mentioned save man. In the ethereal *Vita Nuova* the poet tells how he was one day drawing an angel, and he tells how it seemed to him in his grief that the birds as they flew fell dead and that there were great earthquakes.<sup>2</sup> In the *Sonnets*, in the *Ballate*, and in the *Canzoni*, Dante sometimes speaks of the birds, of their joy at spring and of their migrations; yet his words have mostly the conventional tone of so many poems of Provence and Germany. In the *Letters* references are more frequent; for here the politician or the philosopher becomes more majestic, rhetorical, or didactic in tone. In usurping crows, in the stinking fox, in the thankless viper, or in the soaring eagle and the phenix, Dante finds imagery to embellish his style or to point a moral. It is, however, in the treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and in the *Convivio* that Dante's

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. E. MOORE, *Studies in Dante*, Second Series.      <sup>2</sup> § 23.



anthropological or zoölogical theories occur most abundantly. And how clearly these two works show that Dante the Dogmatist thinks less truthfully, less nobly, than Dante the Poet ! In these two treatises Dante most strongly resembles the encyclopedists of the thirteenth century.

Our author's most beautiful thoughts on animals are scattered with unequal beauty throughout the *Divine Comedy*. The *Inferno* holds the richest imagery of all ; for as we climb with Dante up the Mountain of Purgatory and are wafted off into the thin atmosphere of the Blessed, more and more we miss the illusion of a living world ; or the poet's imagery ceases to be in keeping with the ethereal residents of the Court of Heaven. With these reflexions we may briefly reconsider Dante's animal kingdom from a rather more zoölogical point of view.

In the thirteenth century nobody realised the infinite variety of animal life. Even if the stories of Adam and of Noah had not hindered the study of animate nature, there was another, a greater weakness in the intellectual life of the Middle Ages,—the lack of observation. Instead of observing either his own nature or that of other animals, the medieval philosopher sought his information in encyclopedias, in beast-books, or in works of-fiction. The Crusaders and later travellers brought home tales of marvellous creatures they had 'seen' or heard of in some zoölogical fairy-land. Furthermore, not only were there almost no menageries in Europe, but there existed an extraordinary misunderstanding of common European animals. When Brunetto Latini re-

ports that black sheep say 'meh,' but that white sheep say 'beh,' he is not even quoting the shepherds at second hand.

All together Dante mentions about a hundred birds, beasts, fishes, and monsters. His devils are, so far as can be determined, either the hybrid of man and some lower animal, or they result from distortion, or from combining two or more lower animals. The griffin, the phenix, the dragon, to say nothing of a six-footed serpent and of a fiery adder, are monsters. Other creatures may have a normal anatomy, but they act abnormally. Such are the Three Beasts and other demoniacal animals to be found in Hell. Such too are the beaver, the pelican, and the eagle that gazes into the sun. On the other hand our poet's falcons and hawks are wholly natural. And here it is timely to remark that no other birds than hawks and falcons (except, perhaps, their quarry) were carefully studied during the Middle Ages.

Dante mentions or describes six or seven exotic animals, — the monkey, the lion, the ounce (some kind of leopard or a cheetah), the panther, the beaver, the elephant, the whale, and the dolphin, for these two are exotic, as they live in the sea. Of these it is more than likely that Dante had seen the three first named. Those animals that he knew least Dante nevertheless portrays with the energy of genius. Ignorance hardly lessened his power. Those that he knew best he describes so well as to surpass all other writers of the Middle Ages.

To affirm that Dante could not really have believed in things so fantastic as giants and dragons would be-

token an inadequate knowledge of the age in which he lived. Whoever reads carefully the works of an Albertus Magnus, a Thomas Aquinas, or those of Dante, cannot fail to perceive how greatly their credulity exceeds our own. It is possible, too, that six centuries from now much that we deem rational may be thought mere fantasy.

Dante Alighieri's art and philosophy of the animal kingdom are not vitiated by modern science, for they are part of him; and though we may smile at his dogmas, it is his belief and sincerity, joined to his power, that make his philosophy interesting, his art beautiful. By learning what Dante felt and thought, we discover what impression the animate world made on one of the noblest thinkers, one of the most keen-sighted poets, that have blessed our earth.



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